SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 528. FOR WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 11TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

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No. 528. Feb. 11, 1899.] [One Penny.

SHORT STORIES

A POOR COURTSHIP, BUT—

"Ah, me!" sighed Margie Harrison. "Out there is blue sky, and sun, and fresh air, and a little farther on is grass—and trees. It is spring everywhere except here."

"Out there" was the glimpse of light that came to her, far down the crowded shop—just the little light that crept in under the awnings, and over the heads of the shoppers, to the cashier in her box.

"I know how a canary feels, now!" she went on, to herself.

She was not idle as she soliloquised, for her hands were busy making change for the cash boys. Below her platform, shoppers pulled about the goods and harassed the assistants who, in turn, hectored the boys and girls. Above the conversation, the rustle and clatter, came sharp cries of "Ca-ash!"

Margie was a slender little girl, with pale cheeks that hardly ever saw the sun—so pale that they accentuated the brightness of her dark blue eyes and the brown hair that Nature had roughened becomingly.

For the rest, her mouth would have been kissable, had there been anyone to attend to the matter; and her round chin was softly dimpled.

But no one ever stopped to think that she was good to the eye—that is, except the dapper young shop-walker of that department, and him she had snubbed into a secret enmity—for she was only part of a machine, a whirling, noisy beehive, with never a drone inside its walls.

They were not people; they were employées, and they worked under a masterly rule that made the great business a success, but stole the individuality of the workers.

"I can't stand it another year," she said despairingly. "I wasn't made for darkness. It isn't the work, for I expect to work; it's the withering—heart and soul. I'll go to work in somebody's garden; I'll—I'll wheel a barrow—anything to be outdoors!"

She sighed again, and glanced contemptuously at the light bulb above her, that seemed to make the atmosphere more smothering as she continued her duties.

She knew little about sunshine. She lodged with her only brother, who lived so far from the Emporium that she could not walk, but must reach her work by means of the omnibus. Luncheon was served the employées in a basement room where lights burnt all day; evening, found her riding home to the top room, where she slept.

All her stray glances were directed down the tunnel-like aisle toward the light, so she did not see a young man who stood near by, looking about in a half-confused way, until she turned and caught his eye. His cheeks were tanned, his eyes blue, and he looked kind and honest, so she smiled. He stepped forward and spoke over the heads of the cash-boys.

"I want to get a black gown for my mother—something thin, with violets on it, to look like the country. Can you tell me where to go?"

"Yes, sir," she answered, "Go down the next shop to the right—the end counter. There are lawns and muslins there with violets that you can almost smell."

"Thank you, Miss," said he, partly turning. Then, facing her again: "That's about the only kind of flowers you who serve in shops get a chance to see, I expect."

"Yes, sir," she answered, smiling again, "and it isn't living to shut ourselves away from the Spring like this."

"I know it," he replied with rather shy sympathy. "I couldn't stand this myself. I'm from the country—keep a farm. Give me a pasture with cattle in it, and grass just covered with blue spider wort, pink sensitive roses, larkspur. It beats a city."

"Oh-h-h!" gasped Margie at the thought of so much sweetness. "Think of flowers free for every one to pick, and——"

"Ca-ash!" called an impatient boy, and just then the shop-walker discovered the young man at the desk and stepping up to him touched him on the shoulder:

"Against the rules, sir." Then, to Margie, "Miss Harrison, you should know better than this."

Margie coloured as she explained:

"This gentleman wants to see figured black lawns and——"

"When another customer asks such a question, refer him to me," answered the shopwalker.

With a look of friendly regret, and a protestation that he, himself, was to blame for the breach of rules, the young man suffered himself to be directed to the other end of the shop.

The next morning the spirit of unrest burnt again in the girl's heart, and again she repined. But a wonderful thing happened. The tanned young countryman made his way down the shop towards her desk bearing a beautiful burden which he pushed through the window without a word, but with a sympathetic, brotherly smile on his face, and then turned and left the building.

It was a basket of pansies embedded in damp moss—wonderful, velvety faces in purple, bronze and yellow, looking smilingly at her.

It was the happiest day of her life, a never-to-be-forgotten day. She could not long for the woods when a marvellous bit of the woods had come to her.

The next morning a cash boy brought a great bunch of spring violets.

"A fellow from the country give me a copper to bring you these," he explained.

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Again Margie was in transports, but—the stranger might have brought them himself. She missed his cheery smile.

An hour or so later, however, he strolled through the crowd and smiled from afar. As he was borne nearer, she smiled at him in return over the posies, and ventured, even under the jealous eye of her dragon shopwalker, to say:

"Oh, thank you so much!"

A smile in answer, as he passed on, and another perfect day wore away. At closing time that evening the same young man stood near the main entrance till long after the doors were closed, but the employées poured out of the basement entrance on the other side of the building, and he missed them, much as he would have liked to see one bright-eyed girl in shabby black, who sat in a 'bus holding a bunch of violets, her lips parted in a dreamy smile.

The next morning a bunch of fragrant, nodding lilacs was thrust through her window—the first of the blooms she had ever owned—and again she nodded ecstatic thanks to her unknown friend. That she might be doing wrong in accepting the favour did not occur to her, nor that the joy she felt night and day was not all in the flowers.

Then came a great handful of long-stemmed fleur-de-lis, in all the exquisite shades of purple, that brought to her, who had never seen them growing wild, a vision of pretty banks and rippling water, and again she nodded and smiled her thanks, under disapproving eyes.

The next morning her friend brought his offering in person, walking with determined step and with a decided expression on his face. This time he bore white tea roses—long-stemmed, heavy-headed, fragrance-burdened—and handed them across the desk. She blushed a rosy red, and before she could speak he said:

"I want to say a thing or two and it doesn't make any difference to me who objects," with a defiant glance at the glowering shopwalker.

"But—oh! sir, you have been so kind to me, but I can't talk—it's against the rules. I'll lose my place."

"Miss Harrison!" came the warning.

"Oh, please go!" implored Margie in a half-whisper. "I have twenty minutes for luncheon at one o'clock, and can see you at the back entrance for one moment, if you'll *only* go now."

On this promise the young man went away without a word, but, unfortunately, the shopwalker had heard her make the appointment, and wishing revenge for past slights, and resenting her apparent friendliness with another man, reported the affair in such terms that when luncheon time came an envelope was handed to the girl containing the amount of wages due to her and a notification that her services were no longer required by the firm.

In her distress she forgot all about her appointment with the man who had been the cause of her dismissal, so, as he stood waiting at the door, he was almost knocked over by a slender little girl with hat pulled down over suspiciously red eyes, and an altogether dejected appearance.

"Something has happened!" he exclaimed.

"The shopwalker reported me," was the answer, with an escape of tears, "and they have discharged me."

"No! Did they?" was his exclamation in lively tones, and with a most cheerful expression. "Come," he added, "let us walk down to a café I know, and let me talk to you a moment while you have your luncheon."

"But—I don't know you," demurred Margie.

"Nor do I you," he retorted, with a boyish laugh, "but I want to. Are you afraid to trust me?"

Margie looked in his face a moment, and then walked along beside him until the restaurant was reached. Her escort did not address her again until they were seated in a secluded corner and luncheon had been brought.

"I am Philip Douglass," he said briskly; "twenty-eight years old, unmarried, with three hundred acres of land—and one corner of my farm runs down into the river—a moist, shady little spot where almost every flower will grow if it is planted, and we have planted a good many. I live with the dearest, gentlest mother in the world, and I am worth enough money to do as I please. You are—" he paused

"Margery Harrison," put in the girl.

"Margery—Margery," he reiterated softly. "A sweet name. What else can you tell me that will make me know you better?"

"Twenty years old," began Margery demurely, "stubborn, impatient and unconventional. I lodge with my brother Fred and his wife. I've worked at York's for five years, and now," remembering her trouble, with a quick rush of tears, "they have sent me away without a moment's notice and I must start out to hunt for my daily bread. And here I am, telling all this to you, when I must say good-bye, and thank you, a thousand times, for the beautiful flowers—the first I have ever had given me."

Philip caught her hand as she started to rise. "Sit down a moment, Miss Harrison—Margery—till I tell you what I meant by those flowers. They meant that when I saw you perched up there in that poisoned air, like a poor, forgotten and neglected flower, with your pale cheeks and eyes like velvet pansies, I felt such a pity for you that I wanted to transplant you out into the green fields and under the blue sky where the birds sing all day. And in a day or two more I began to feel a pity for myself, that I was not sure of transplanting you, and that you might slip away from me altogether. You'll come with me, won't you, Margery?"

Margie's hand was still in his, screened from the rest of the room by the long table-cloth, and as she searched his face wonderingly her cheeks crimsoned.

"But—but—you don't know me. I'm penniless, and haven't anyone in the world but Fred. It's all so sudden—you might change your mind."

"Never!" he exclaimed emphatically. "And as for your being friendless and penniless, you'll be so much the more mine. But you must know more about me. I'm a queer sort of fellow—what my neighbours call a 'book farmer,' but I've shown them that my book farming pays. But I want you to be satisfied with me—the man."

"I am satisfied," murmured the girl. "You carry your recommendation in your honest face, and in your eyes that I thought that first day were the kindest eyes I ever saw. I—I am willing to be transplanted."

Phillip did not say a word at first, just sat and held Margie's hand tightly, while he looked long and happily into her sweet, blushing face. Then, with a deep indrawing of his breath, he spoke with a tremble in his voice.

"My Margery, my Margery. It is a poor courtship, but it will be a long honeymoon to make up for it. I will love you and care for you so tenderly, that you will never regret this hastiness. I knew, the moment I saw your face, that I could make you happy, and the next time I knew I wanted you to make me happy."

May Garbutt.

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THE LAWFUL HEIR.

By JULIAN FITZMORE.

PART II.

SUMMARY.

CONRAD WALKER, the only son of an English family of high reputation, married the daughter of a retired merchant. The anger of his parents knew no bounds, and Conrad was forbidden the house. Having his own estates in Canada he took his wife to that country, but after many years she died, leaving him with a son to look after. Thinking his son would like the trip, and being curious to see who had inherited his estates since his parents' deaths, Conrad Walker returned to England. He found his estates had been claimed by the Earl of Aldergate, a distant cousin. The Earl has a very beautiful and kind daughter—the Hon. Eva Porton—and by chance Conrad Walker's son meets her at a garden party and falls in love with her.

CHAPTER V.

A GOOD SAMARITAN.

'T was a few days after the garden party at Porton that Mr. William Walker set out from The Bull for a stroll round the district, after having spent the morning with his father in discussing various phases of their holiday.

"How long are you intending to stay yet at Wellcaster, dad?" had inquired the young man. "I thought we were only coming over to England for a week or two, with just a run down from London to see this place, and here we've been for some six weeks or so in Wellcaster alone, and we've yet got to go and see the house and town where you were born, and which you've often spoken of, near Durham."

The elder man's grave smile deepened, and his blue eyes rested lovingly on his son.

"Ah, my boy," said he, "I did not know you were in such a hurry to leave Wellcaster. I had thought you rather liked being here!"

"So I do, dad. I think it's a delightful old place, a splendid little country town; and Porton Lodge, you know—well, I never saw any house I think half so grand and baronial. How proud the family must be!"

"Including the Hon. Eva Porton, of course?" put in Mr. Walker.

"Yes, certainly, dad."

"I believe, William, you rather like that young lady?"

"Like! Ah, well, yes. But what's the good of liking what one can't get, dad? You've told me oft enough that it were better to be lowly born, and happy in love, than to be high-born and miserable. You've said how proud and exclusive the English aristocracy are, and how they resent all connections—from family ties or otherwise—with those they deem their inferiors; so if this is so, what is the use of my thinking of Miss Eva Porton, fairly well-to-do and respectable Canadians though we are?"

And the son's face suffused a rosy red. Yet it was as beautiful as it is unusual to see the confidence between son and father, even upon so delicate a topic. Probably the fact that there was no mother living to consult made the affection between these two all the dearer and the more communicative.

"William, do you love this girl?" asked the parent suddenly, after a slight pause.

The young man turned his frank blue eyes on his father, and met his gaze blushingly but fully.

"Yes, father, I do," said he. "And,"—he spoke slowly and deliberately,—"I would do anything for her! I love her with my whole heart and soul!"

"You have, of course, not spoken to her about such a thing?"

The few words said at the garden party did not seem to William to require recognition as being here referred to.

"No," said he "There is no use in so doing, to be refused," he went on, somewhat bitterly, yet with a laugh. "What could I offer her? And even if she loved me, what about the Earl and the Countess? No, dad, no. I may love, but it must be 'loved and lost,' I suppose."

"Ah, well, we'll talk of this later, William. Now I've some letters to write, and Briggs to see. You'll have a walk, I expect?"

"Yes," said the son.

And so it came to pass that on this day in question Mr. William Walker was strolling along the high road from Wellcaster to Porton, by the side of the park surrounding the Lodge. Unconsciously, as it seemed to him, he had taken this path, and yet he knew why he had done so, or at least, when he asked his heart it soon gave him the reason. It was because this way led to Porton Lodge, because there was just a chance of seeing Miss Eva Porton driving or walking somewhere in the neighbourhood on this fine afternoon.

He had almost reached the entrance to the park, when he heard loud voices in the shrubberies that surrounded it—voices that seemed from their tones to indicate anger and quarrelling amongst their owners. The latter were hidden from him by the stone wall bounding the park on the road side, which was just high enough to be above his head.

Without even a second thought, wondering simply what was taking place, William had at once climbed the wall, and there a curious sight met his gaze. The two contestants were Mr. Herbert Blair and a young country lad, doubtless from Wellcaster. The latter had, it appeared, been trespassing in the shrubbery, when he was caught by Mr. Blair, and having been ordered off, became insolent, owing to which the other was now trying to drag him out into the open park, a proceeding which the boy resisted as strongly as possible.

"I tell 'ee I worn't a-poachin' or a-bird-nestin'," said the lad sulkily; "And I won't 'ave 'ee a-draggin' me about either." With this he gave an extra tug that sent Mr. Blair sprawling against a holly bush, much to

that gentleman's discomfort. But he did not lose his hold of the boy, and when he had recovered himself, raised his whip and struck the urchin heavily, twice across the body, making him fairly yell with pain.

All this had been done so quickly and unexpectedly that William had had no chance or time of interfering, and the combatants were so much engaged that neither of them were aware of his presence.

When, however, he saw Mr. Herbert again raise his whip, and strike the boy on the bare legs, he called out loudly:

"Here, here, don't be a coward. That's enough anyway!"

So saying, he jumped down hurriedly into the shrubbery from the wall, but in his haste and righteous anger he did not observe a stone standing out near the bottom. His leg caught it with such effect as to cause that member to begin at once to swell and go black, whilst for himself, unable to stand from the pain, he sank down on the ground.

Herbert Blair, whose face had become white as death with passion and hatred at the interference of this "low fellow," and who had advanced a few steps towards confronting him also as a trespasser, now smiled maliciously, as he turned on his heel, saying:

"Just serves you right, sir, for your confounded impertinence! Now you may stay there till you feel disposed to get up and walk home with your friend here."

And, giving the boy another threat of what he'd get if he were caught trespassing again, the Countess's son disappeared.

The pain of the injured limb had been so severe that William Walker had fainted, just as Mr. Herbert had passed out of the shrubbery into the park. For some minutes he lay quite unconscious to what was around him, despite the Wellcaster youth's vigorous attempts to "wake him up"—well-meant, but ineffectual. The latter, however, was sensible enough to stay by him till he came round, on which happening he was asked by the young man to go and get assistance from the lodge-keeper if possible.

In a few minutes that functionary, whose house was, as was said before, not far away, came up, and by his aid Mr. Walker managed to get to the lodge, where the injured leg was bathed and well attended to by the keeper's wife, whilst the boy explained, as lucidly as he could, that "it wor all along o' that there Mister Blair, who'd a-been thrashing 'im, when this 'ere good gentleman interfered, and said as 'ow it wor an awful shame, and 'ad jumped over the wall and sprained his leg, as to which Mr. Blair said as 'ow it sarved him right, and wouldn't help 'im one bit."

It was arranged that Mr. Walker should sit still for an hour or two, whilst the boy was asked to call at The Bull on his way home, and tell them to send on the trap for Mr. William Walker.

The Hon. Eva Porton was driving her pony carriage into Wellcaster that afternoon about three, when, as she was passing the lodge, she bethought herself of a little favour she had promised to do Mrs. Scrubbs, the keeper's wife, some time ago, and thought that she would just look in about it. So, knocking at the door, after dismounting from the pony-carriage, she astonished Mrs. Scrubbs on walking in as usual, by a sudden confusion and blushing as she saw the young man on the couch with his leg bandaged.

"Ah, Mr. Walker," said Miss Eva, advancing towards him, "you here—and hurt? What is this? What does it all mean?"

William held out his hand in response, saying quietly:

"An accident as I was walking on the road, Miss Porton, thank you. Nothing serious. I only climbed the wall, and caught my leg in jumping down."

"So you're a prisoner, and can't get back to Wellcaster? Well, I'm driving there. Will you accompany us in the pony carriage?"

And, without waiting for his answer, Miss Porton called John, the groom, who came and assisted Mr. Walker in.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Scrubbs's voluble tongue had given the lady a full account of the affair, for Mr. Herbert Blair was no friend of hers.

Eva Porton felt her blood tingle at the inhuman conduct of her so-called half-brother.

"I must apologise for his behaviour, if one can apologise for such treatment, Mr. Walker," said she, as they drove townward.

"Oh, please don't, there is no need, Miss Porton," he returned.

"No need!" ejaculated the girl warmly. "He ought to be ashamed of himself." Then, with a sudden burst of pride and wrath: "Anyhow, I'm glad he is not a Porton, Mr. Walker."

What would she have said had she known the man who sat beside her *was* a Porton?

Mr William was deposited safely at The Bull, to the relief of his father's anxiety. The latter thanked the Hon. Eva very much, as did also the son, but she laughingly repudiated any thanks as she drove away, hoping he would soon be better, and saying her groom should call to inquire to-morrow.

She let the Earl know what she thought of it that night, too, and his Lordship mentally ejaculated that "the girl was indeed a Porton!"

Mr. Conrad Walker had meanwhile spent a busy day resolving whether it was his duty to go back to Canada with William, or ——

And he finally decided to consult Briggs about it, and take him into confidence.

CHAPTER VI.

A Double Consultation.

IT was early next day that Mr. Conrad Walker carried out his determination of the previous evening, and paid a visit to Lawyer Briggs, as everybody in Wellcaster called the local scion of the law.

Mr. Briggs had been in practice at Wellcaster for some years, and as the practice before his time had belonged to his father, and previous to that, to his grandfather, it may be assumed that the worthy lawyer knew most of the secrets of the families in and around the district. The Briggs family had long been the solicitors for the Earls of Aldergate.

He was a clean-shaven, keen-eyed man was Lawyer Briggs. Mr. Conrad Walker had consulted him before on some business affairs in London and Canada, without at first revealing his identity, though he did so later on, and it was thus that the lawyer had been able to recommend the two tourists to the kind notice of Captain and Mrs. Jackson.

But early this morning as the Canadian gentleman was, Mr. Briggs had been honoured with an earlier client, the lady who has just been mentioned. She had, after her thoughts of a few days before, resolved to see what the solicitor thought of the affair, at the earliest

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opportunity, and with a woman's usual idea, thought she should either learn if he was aware of the identity she had already established in her own mind, or if not, she would have the pleasure of putting it before him, and seeing how he liked the surprise.

Like a woman, too, when she makes up her mind, Mrs. Jackson was not long in coming to the point. She entered the office just after ten o'clock, before Mr. Briggs had had time to go through his morning's correspondence, quite taking even the astute lawyer aback by her early visit and evidently important mission.

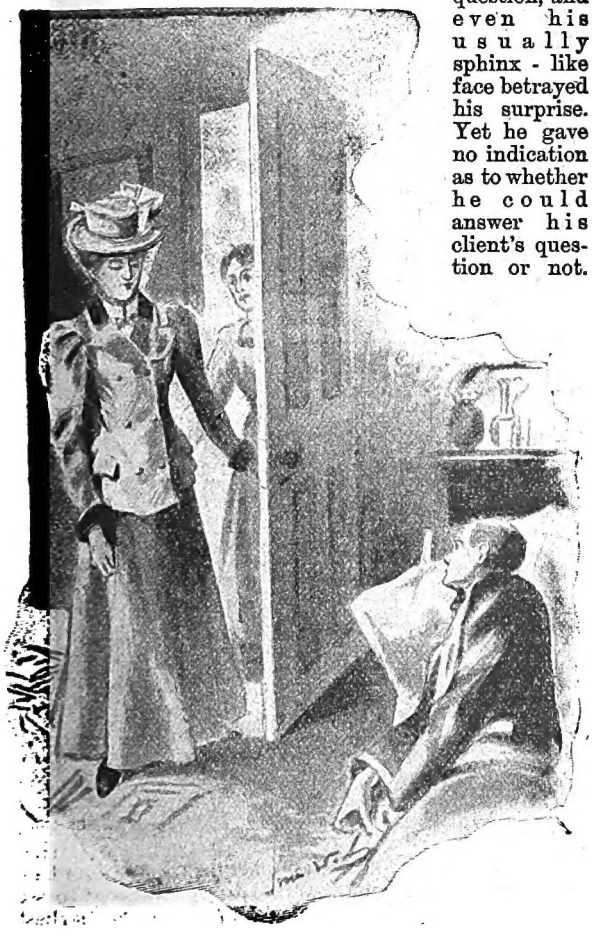
"You are early this morning, Mrs. Jackson," said the solicitor, shaking hands. "To what may I attribute the honour of your visit?"

"I want you to tell me something, Mr. Briggs," said the lady. "I have just been dying for the past day or two to ask you, but I've not been able to come till now, though I have taken the first opportunity. You'll promise to tell me, won't you?"

"Certainly, madam, if it is anything I can lawfully do," was the cautious reply.

"Well, these two tourists, Mr. Conrad Walker and his son, who are they?"

The lawyer was somewhat taken aback by the abruptness of the question, and even his usually sphinx-like face betrayed his surprise. Yet he gave no indication as to whether he could answer his client's question or not.



"Ah! Mr. Walker, you here?"

He simply looked at her, and then smilingly said, "Why, they are Mr. Conrad Walker, and his son, tourists from Canada, who are spending some weeks in England."

"You know them well? You've done some business for them?"

"I've had the honour of the latter, Mrs. Jackson. As to knowing them well—well, I've told you what I know."

"And you mean to say you don't know what they're doing in this district so long?" queried the lady, with a sharp glance.

"Oh, yes, they're staying at The Bull!" retorted he.

The lady laughed.

"How provoking you are, Mr. Briggs," said she. "You make me be plain and rude in my questions instead of telling me what I want to know."

"I've told you, madam."

"No, you've not. Now, look here, don't let's waste time further. I'm speaking in confidence. Do you know that Mr. Conrad Walker is Mr. William Porton, or rather is the Earl of Aldergate?"

If the lawyer had guessed such, or did know, he kept his face as inscrutable as ever.

"Whatever are you saying, Mrs. Jackson!" asked he.

"What I am sure is true, only I want you to confirm it. I found it out the other night after the party, but I've said nothing to anyone but you, and you need not fear my doing so."

"Well, if you are satisfied as to what you say, you scarcely need to ask me, who cannot even know that much. You see, Mrs. Jackson, we lawyers ——."

But the conversation was cut short by the entrance of a clerk, who said that Mr. Conrad Walker desired an interview, and the lawyer ordered him to be shown in. Mrs. Jackson, therefore, had to rise and say adieu, half satisfied only with the result of her visit, and yet wholly certain in her own mind. The new-comer bade her "Good morning" gaily as she met him at the door, and he promised to call on her before long.

"I suppose you have heard, Briggs," said he, on getting settled down into an easy armchair which the lawyer placed for him, "of this latest development of spleen and rudeness on the part of young Blair?"

"Why, yes, of course, it is all over the town. That young scamp of Mother Wellon's would see to that, you may rest assured, for he's praised up Mr. William through it all and run down Mr. Blair till all Wellcaster is eulogising the one and venting its spite on the other. Not but what he deserves it, too! The fact of the matter is, your Lordship——"

"There, drop that, Briggs, you know what we agreed. No 'Lordship' for me yet at any rate. Though, by the way, it's principally this I've come to have a talk with you about. At least something pertaining to it."

The lawyer sat and listened attentively.

"I have, as you know, Briggs, held back so far; should do all my life, I might say, if I could, from claiming my rights. You know all the story, and you may be sure that I'm not keen now on what I gave up even when my dear wife was alive. And when I came to England, I had firmly resolved that my son should know no more of who he is than he knows now, and that's—nothing!"

The lawyer betrayed his surprise at this by a start.

"But things have changed rather, and some unexpected developments have occurred. You see, I had no

idea that the present possessor had no son, nor that he had a daughter such as the Honourable Eva Porton. And, Briggs, there's another and more startling fact. I find from private conversation with my son that he is in love with this young lady, and from more things than one I fancy she reciprocates his love. He is more severely hit than I thought. But he withholds telling her of his love because he fears refusal, probably from her—still more from her father—owing to, as he thinks, his inferior position. Now, you see, I know what William is; I know that he never loves lightly, and I know how this love has gone into his very life, and now, if we returned to Canada, he would never be the same again. And so, Briggs, I have been wavering in my mind as to not making any revelation, and I have wondered if it would be better to disclose to him who he is, so that he might not feel at all inferior in rank to the lady whom he wishes to make his wife. Of course it could not be made public till after the present Earl's death; as far as I see, there is no reason why it should. And I don't think the present Earl will be a long liver; he has never looked like one to me."

"His heart is affected, your Lordship," said the lawyer.

"There you are again, Briggs! Well, I myself am not likely to survive many years. So I wanted your opinion of the matter as to the wisdom of telling my son."

The lawyer rubbed his hands gleefully, whilst a smile of satisfaction crossed his face.

"I'm glad you've half-decided to do it at last, your Lordship!—Mr. Walker, then!"—added he parenthetically, as the other raised a warning finger. "It's only what is right and fair, and it will, I think, just about consummate the happiness of Mr. William and Miss Eva. How strange, when you come to think of it that it is *he* who is the titled one, the wealthy one, and she who is the——."

"There, that will do, Briggs! Miss Eva will never lose her title, I must see to that, if she accepts my boy. But he shall know nothing of it till I think it is the desirable time to tell. She shall love him for himself and his own good qualities alone. It would be advisable, however, that you should have all documents and papers quite in order and ready to prove my claims, &c., if at any time that should be necessary. So please see to that at once."

The solicitor promised to do so forthwith, and with many protestations of pleasure at the turn of events, accompanied his client to the door.

Meanwhile at Porton Lodge the Earl had expressed himself strongly to the Countess on the subject of Mr. Herbert's escapade, the rumours of which had reached even his ears.

"The fact is, my Lady," said he, "your son is getting himself into disrepute all over the country."

"There, there you go, my Lord," replied the Countess, "always grumbling at Herbert. But he will not have to stand the insults of those tourist people much longer. It is not the first time they have made themselves obnoxious. And I think you might have rather a word of praise for Herbert's looking after your rights by keeping trespassers and intruders off the land, rather than be constantly blaming him."

"It is his habit of disregarding what people will think that I oppose," said the Earl.

"Well, really, I'm sure I get tired of one thing or another. There's him on one side, and Eva on the other. What about the scandal of her driving that forward young Walker home in the pony carriage? Do you approve of that? Because if you do, I don't and I've told her so."

"Certainly not," said the Earl.

"Ah, I thought you surely wouldn't! You know, Porton, the fact is, it is time Eva began to settle down. She's getting too independent, has too much freedom here. Herbert has, as you know, for some time loved her, but really, since this last month or so, she's been that awkward that he's said nothing to her beyond what he was obliged."

The Earl's brow darkened. He evidently was not struck with the idea. "Eva must be free to choose for herself, Laura," he said, "If I do not approve of her choice, be sure I shall let her know it in no half-measured way."

And with this her Ladyship had to remain content.

CHAPTER VII.

A Repetition of the Old, Old Story.

It was a very beautiful day in the first week of September—one of September's loveliest days. The fields were all tinged with the decaying hand of autumn; the trees were all turning their foliage into various shades of yellow, whilst the bramble trailed its long, straggly tendrils over the other denizens of the hedgerows, and showed here and there a cluster of large, juicy blackberries hanging from a fruitful bough.

Yet the warm September sunlight, so very mellow in its influence, fell upon all these dwellers of the fields and woods, and made them look rich with its burnishing, and soothing to the eye and mind, just as is the reflected glory of the sunset after a hot summer's day.

The Hon. Eva Porton had taken her book, intending to walk through the park and to sit down to read quietly by the stream that meandered there. She walked along slowly, singularly uninterested in all the beautiful scenes of Nature around her, for Eva was one of those who generally are particularly attracted to the wonders that surround them in field or lane. But to-day she strolled lazily on, nor, when she reached the stream, did she sit down by it, as she had previously intended. She did not even attempt to read. Instead of that she turned off out of the park into a footpath that ran alongside the hedge, separating the fields from the road, into Wellcaster.

The grave thoughtfulness of her face showed that the Hon. Miss Porton was pre-occupied with thoughts, which, however, if judged by the way in which her countenance occasionally lit up, were not on the whole very sad ones. Now and then she stopped to gather some particularly striking plant or flower, though in her meditations she often, soon afterwards, pulled them in pieces, almost without knowing what she was doing. Sometimes she whispered, so to speak, a word or two to herself, and raised her head with a proud and happy look; once or twice she even laughed to herself, a low, sweet laugh of contentment.

"And why am I coming along here; why going towards Wellcaster?" she asked herself for about the tenth time.

Then she smiled again, and her heart answered for her, though she did not hesitate to put the answer into whispered words, whilst a deep crimson overspread her lovely face.

"It is because he once told me how he liked this path,

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and that he often came along it! Eva, Eva! Whatever are you coming to?"

But her heart only laughed the more, and she went happily on her way. Some yards further on a lovely spray of white convolvulus caught her eye. It was high up on the hedge, trailing over a privet bush, and falling down in a cluster of flowers on the other side towards the road. She tried more than once to reach it, but, though she could just touch it with her fingers, she could not get hold of it securely enough to break it off where she wanted.

Suddenly, she became aware that someone had come up on the other side of the hedge—come up unheard, from the fact of his feet falling so lightly on the soft turf by the roadside, and unseen, from the thickness of the privet hedge between them.

At the same time, she saw a hand break off the convolvulus bunch of flowers just where she wanted it doing, and immediately afterwards the form of a young man appeared above the hedge, he having climbed up the bank to hand over his prize to the desirer.

The mutual recognition surprised both, and brought a flood of rose colour to each of their cheeks.

"May I have the honour of giving you the convolvulus, Miss Porton?" asked Mr. William Walker, for he it was. "I saw the branch swinging from side to side, and someone trying to grasp it, so I came from the other side of the road to—well, assist, I suppose, though I had no idea that it was you, Miss Porton. I am so glad to have come up just in time to be of service to you!"

"Oh, Mr. Walker, really it was too kind of you altogether to trouble about so trifling a thing. I was just struck with the pretty bunch of flowers as I was walking along the path here, and reached out to get it, but it was rather beyond my reach."

"Are you going towards Wellcaster, Miss Porton?"

"Yes, Mr. Walker."

She said it half unthinkingly, for she had no fixed idea now as to which way she intended going, as she stood toying with her dainty parasol, and with her frank dark eyes glancing occasionally at his manly face.

"I am going there myself, Miss Porton," said he, perhaps a trifle eagerly. "May I have the pleasure of accompanying you?"

"If you care to do so," said she shyly.

"Care!" ejaculated the young man, as he came through a wide gap in the hedge a little way lower down. "Care! Don't you know by now, Miss Porton, that nothing is too much trouble for me to do for you, that you talk of 'caring'?"

They walked along side by side; he, eager yet calm in his love, with the true Canadian's ideas of equality and freedom, almost forgetting that the girl by his side was an Earl's daughter, and he, a Canadian farmer; she, shy, blushing, and yet so happy, though now and then smiling at what Society in London would think of her, if it saw her, or what the Countess would say if she caught a glimpse of the scene. She felt it incumbent on her to say something at last.

"I trust, Mr. Walker, that your leg is now quite better."

"Yes, thank you. It *was* kind of you to drive me to Wellcaster that day—it was almost worth straining one's muscles to be so humoured."

"There, don't joke, Mr. Walker."

"I'm not joking, Miss Porton," said he, with a grave look.

"Well, then, don't flatter," said she coyly.

"I'm not flattering you," returned he earnestly. Then after a long try to get a good look at her downcast eyes, he murmured, "You know I mean what I say, Miss Porton! You know what I think; what I wish; what I so eagerly long for!"

Her face was more hidden than ever under that picture-hat, whilst of the brown eyes he could scarcely

She tried more than once to reach it.

get a glimpse. Her heart was beating violently, and she trembled.

"Whatever do you mean, Mr. Walker?" asked she, recovering some words after a determined effort.

He took her small, daintily-gloved hand in his, and she did not withdraw it!

This encouragement enabled him to proceed, but the story came out now in a regular burst. He had forgotten now who she was; everything but that he loved her.

"Oh, Miss Porton, you know what I mean! You know that I love you! Yes, you *must* hear me, though I'm unworthy of you; I love you with all my heart and soul. Perhaps I ought not to tell you so—you, who are so far above me—but I cannot help it. I *must* tell you how I've loved you from the first, and shall love you till I die! There! And," after a pause, in which she had turned away her head, though the tears—tears of joy—had gathered in her eyes, "you, Miss Porton? I am not altogether wrong, am I? Surely you love me a little? You do, don't you?"

This time he bent and gazed right into those dark eyes. That gaze seemed to give their owner courage, for she lifted up her head proudly, and said, in a very low whisper, "Yes."

He clasped her to his breast, broad daylight as it was.

"Eva, my Eva! My own darling Eva!"

He seemed as if he could never tire of saying the name.

"There, Master William," said she at last, arranging her hat after at least a dozen kisses, "there, are you satisfied?"

"Not quite, my darling," laughed he.

Then they walked on, but oh! how bright and sunny the whole world was! And they were so happy, so deliciously happy!

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It was she who first broke the silence of that hand-in-hand walk towards Wellcaster.

"William," shyly she breathed his name, "whatever will papa say? And the Countess! Good gracious, she *will* go on!"

The young man's reply was laconic and Canadian.

"Let her!" he said. "As to the Earl, you leave that to my father and me. Father somehow always manages to get people round who are awkward, and no doubt he'll help us."

"I must return to Porton Lodge now, dear," she said. "I am not going to Wellcaster. I am too happy."

"As you please, my darling," said he, turning with her. "It will give us all the more opportunity of telling our love to each other."

But their hearts were too full for many words. Her face was radiant with love and smiles, and Mr. William Walker just looked as happy as could be. They talked of the future with hearts beating high with hope, and the gentleman promised to call upon the Earl on the following day.

"I never dreamt, Eva, that I should win the love of an Earl's daughter," said William, as they stood, before parting, at the side gate to the park. "But I'll try to make you as happy as any loving husband ever could," said he.

"And I'll try to be as good a wife as any husband ever had," said she, her great brown eyes resting on him lovingly.

Then there was a renewal of the "dozen kisses" ere they parted, two hearts as full of love and happiness as Heaven's sunshine ever rested on.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Countess of Aldergate Receives a Shock

T may be safely said that the Countess of Aldergate had never received such a shock in her life as when, being called into the library the following morning, she was acquainted by the Earl with the news which he had just learnt from the lips of his daughter herself, which was meagre enough in all conscience, seeing that it was to the effect that Mr. William Walker would call upon his Lordship about eleven that morning, and formally propose for the hand of the charming Hon. Eva!

The Earl himself had gone red in the face, and stared at his daughter as if she were not in her right mind, when, with some natural hesitation and shyness, she had broached the subject, thinking it would better prepare the way for her lover. Then he had become angry, so far as he ever was angry with her, and said,

"Surely, Eva, you have not considered what you really are doing by this? You, whom I had intended for some nobler marriage than that with a wandering Canadian!"

"There is no nobler marriage than that which springs from true love, papa," the girl had nobly answered. "I am high-born enough as it is, and am wealthy enough, too. So that all I see is necessary is for me to be happy and loved, and I am sure that is what I shall be with Mr. Walker."

She had hesitated at the name, but in the end surrendered "William," as being perhaps too familiar, as yet, anyhow.

"Of course, Eva, I want you to be loved and happy, and I would not wish to force on you a disagreeable marriage, but you must allow me to say, before this has gone too far, that the other ideal alliances I and the Countess have had in view for you would be much more preferable."

"I don't think so, papa," said the girl, "Mr. Walker, like his father, is a thorough gentleman, and that is more than can be said for all my suitors—titled or untitled. And papa," she added coaxingly, going up and putting her arms round his neck in such a sweet way as half to disarm his perhaps justifiable resistance, "papa, you know, I love him, and he loves me, and I should be so unhappy if you refuse your consent. You can't tell how miserable I should be!"

"Well, well, this is an affair!" said he, "But naturally it is our duty to consult your mother. We must ask her to come here."

He rang the bell, and bade the footman request the Countess's attendance.

She came. Eva had expected a scene when her stepmother learnt the state of the case, but even Eva's expectations fell short of what happened.

The Countess held up her hands in righteous horror.

"Ernest!" she said, "you are surely not going, for one moment, to listen to any such absurdity. If Eva has no more sense than to go and make a laughing stock of herself, and a disgrace of us, by marrying a low-born adventurer from the Far West, instead of a real English gentleman, there is no need *we* should add to the folly by giving our countenance to it. Those people have been far too presuming for my fancy all along. Herbert did right in trying to make that impudent young man keep his proper place."

"A coward!" whispered the roused girl. "A despicable coward!"

"Eva! You forget of whom you are speaking!" said the Countess indignantly. "You are speaking of *my* son!"

"I can't help it," said the other, with her brown eyes blazing. "You make me say it."

"Ernest," said his wife, "you had better ask Eva to leave the room if we are to talk of this."

The father looked at the daughter, who, without further noticing her stepmother, remarked,

"I will go, papa. But you must not forget what I said."

She went, and retiring to her own room, burst into tears. Yet she was happy in her heart, for she knew that no Countess or anyone else could take away the love she felt and the love she had won.

For a long time her Ladyship talked with the Earl, and as she talked her influence began to make itself felt, so that Eva's chances of success gradually declined, and the Earl had practically settled not to assent to this proposal, when the footman announced that Mr. Briggs wished to see his Lordship on a matter of importance.

"Show him in," said the Earl.

Then putting out his hand, as the lawyer entered, and the Countess rose to retire, he greeted him with:

"Good morning, Briggs. You're early to-day. Anything important?"

"Very important, I think, your Lordship, or I should not have troubled you. Ah, your Ladyship,"—as the Countess was leaving the room—"it might, perhaps, be well if you could give us your presence and advice for a minute or two. Your Lordship doesn't mind my asking, I hope?"

"Certainly not! But what has my wife to do with our business, my dear sir? She knows nothing of my affairs, you know."

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"Her Ladyship may be useful, however, in this case," said the lawyer.

So the Countess returned and sat down, whilst both she and her husband waited eagerly to know the cause of Mr. Briggs' strange proposal.

"Your Lordship may well be surprised at my early visit this morning," began the lawyer, resting his arms on the table, where he had placed his packet of documents in due order, "but I assure you it is of the utmost importance, or I would not have troubled her Ladyship and yourself. You will pardon my speaking plainly, but I must do so in order to explain the position. Your Lordship will, I believe, this morning have an interview with that young tourist now staying at The Bull—Mr. William Walker—on a matter of importance. Probably, too, his father may call upon you."

"You are mistaken, Briggs," interrupted the Earl. "I know to what you allude, and as to which it would seem they have thought it necessary to consult you, but it is useless. I have quite resolved that I shall not interview Mr. William Walker, a mere boy, on any such subject; it is simply absurd." Here he was fortified by the gracious smile and nod of the Countess, in her superior scorn of such persons. "As to his father coming! Why, that is even more absurd. I never heard of a youth whose proposal had to be seconded by the presence of his father! 'Pon my word, if it didn't bring Eva in, it would be as good as a comic opera."

And the Earl and Countess laughed boisterously.

But the lawyer looked grave.

"Your Lordship must pardon me," said he, "if I look upon this as a more serious affair than you suppose. You will act, to my mind, somewhat incautiously if you refuse to see the gentleman in question, even on a less important matter than this."

"And pray, why should I have to receive any person at Porton Lodge unless I choose, Mr. Briggs?" asked the Earl. "Cannot I do as I like in my own house?"

The lawyer coughed ominously and hemmed once or twice ere he spoke.

"That is just it, your Lordship," said he slowly. "You see—pardon my putting it so abruptly—it is not your own house—since Mr. Conrad Walker this Canadian tourist, is the long-lost Mr. William Porton, Earl of Aldergate!"

The solicitor had watched closely to see the effect of his words. And what an effect it was! The Countess laughed hysterically, declaring that it was all absurd; an impossible story; a lie, in fact! And she ended by going into hysterics pure and simple. The Earl—so we may still call him—became ashy white and looked at the man opposite him with dazed glance and open mouth. A great blow had fallen on him, and instinctively he knew the truth.

"Briggs, is this true?" he whispered, when he could speak. "Are you sure, have you positive proofs that this man—eh—this gentleman, is my long-lost cousin, and the real owner of—of—you know?"

"There's no doubt whatever about it, my Lord," said Briggs. "I have all the documents here, marriage certificates, birth certificates, and everything required to prove the claim. In fact the court would decide in ten minutes in his favour. It's somewhat strange now one can trace the family resemblance in his face that none of us ever noticed it—none except one lady."

"Ah," said the Earl slowly, "that was Eva, was it?"

"No, sir. It was Mrs. Jackson, of Netherthorpe. She recognised it, and spoke to me of it, but I tried to put her off."

"Then Eva doesn't know Mr. William Walker—Porton, rather—is her cousin, and heir to these titles and estates?"

"Not at all; nor does he himself!"

"What!" exclaimed the Earl. "Is he ignorant of his identity?"

"Perfectly," said the lawyer.

Then, after a pause, "Well, what do you advise or propose, Briggs?"

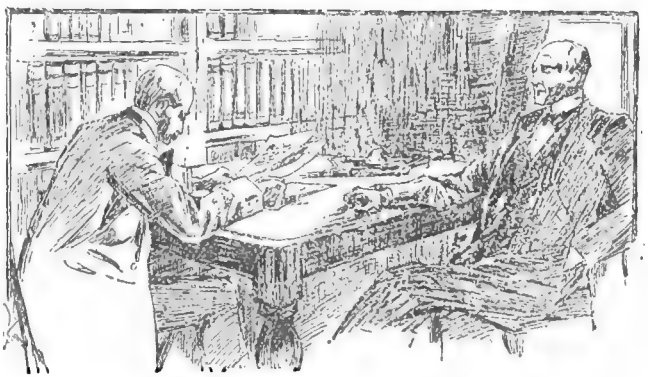
"Mr. Walker—yes I'll call him so—has requested me to put before you the following offer. You shall sanction the engagement and marriage of his son with Miss Eva—for they really love each other, I understand, deeply—allowing them, when they have the desire, to reside at Porton Lodge with you, though they'll no doubt mostly live in London. If you agree to this Mr. Walker, who is not ambitious to take up the title, is willing to leave the whole estate in your possession for life, as at present, excepting a third of the income which is to go to Mr. William and his bride. You would still retain all titles and power during your life; at your death he, if alive, would declare his title; and, if dead, Mr. William would of course be the new Earl. I must say I think it an extremely generous proposition, nay, a magnanimous one. There is only one other stipulation, which you will see is best for all—the two Blairs are to live elsewhere than at the Lodge here."

It need not be told how delighted Mr. William Porton—we can call him that just for once—was, on receiving an unexpected welcome and approval from the Earl, on his formal proposal for Eva's hand, nor how that young lady was also extremely astonished at the change in her father's demeanour.

But it was none the less welcome, and at last two loving hearts were happy.

They were soon afterwards married; but not till the Earl died suddenly, some nine months later, did they learn the truth; and when Mr. Conrad Walker became the new Earl in reality, then no one was more surprised than the two young people at finding that after all, Porton was their true name and dignity!

Happy indeed in love was their married life, and happy they made everybody around them, both as the heirs, and afterwards, when, a few years later, they in turn came into the titles and estates as Earl and Countess of Aldergate.



He looked at the documents.

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A Tale of Two Daggers.

My friend Bert Paget has a nice place on the heights of Pasadena. When I am in the vicinity, I make it convenient to drop in on him, sometimes, for weeks at a time; and when I am not in the vicinity I make it convenient to have business there.

Bert and I understand each other, and Bert's wife happens to be my youngest sister, and a great favourite of mine, which may, in some measure, account for the mutual understanding existing between her husband and me. Bert is passionately fond of his wife, in which I don't blame him.

One evening Bert and I were sitting in his study enjoying our after-dinner cigars. I had just returned from Jamaica. The lamp cast a soft, orange radiance over the room, dimly outlining the odds and ends that Bert had picked up in various quarters of the globe during his ante-marriage wanderings, from a Damascus blade here to a boomerang there; a Sioux war bonnet in one corner, and a group of South Sea war clubs in another. The window before which we sat in the soft glow of the twilight, overlooked a balcony and the surrounding hills dotted with lights, while the brilliant stars twinkled in the sky, making a picture of fairylike beauty. Over the mantel-piece were a Zulu shield and a half dozen assegais, while beneath these latter were two crossed daggers.

I had not, to my remembrance, seen them before, and after glancing at them for a moment, rose from my chair and stepped closer to examine them. They were a pair, and each bore along the blade a number of characters of some written language.

The hilts were of a metal resembling gold, in which were set a great number of jewels that sparkled in the lamplight.

After a moment's inspection, I turned towards Bert with the intention of asking him their history; when, as I did so, I saw him looking at me with a frown, something unusual with Bert.

"What's the matter?" I asked in surprise.

"Nothing, only I suppose you'll ask me to tell you about those things next, and I've got tired of them," he answered in an irritable tone, turning towards the window.

"You had better wait till you're asked, before you jump into a fellow like that," I retorted, with some asperity.

"Excuse it, Rob," he replied; "I meant nothing, but there's an odd tale there," nodding towards the weapons, "and, oh, pshaw!" he concluded, as if the subject were unworthy of further discussion.

"If you have no objection, I'd like to hear it," I said, keen for a tale of mystery.

"I knew you would," he replied, moodily.

"Not if it annoys you," I responded quickly, "perhaps Nellie——"

"Nellie is the only one who knows, and she is bound to secrecy," he interrupted.

"Then why not tell me yourself?" I asked, for I fancied that he was in the mood, and therefore, pushed my advantage.

"You wouldn't believe me," he answered briefly and sulking.

"Try me," I said, insinuatingly, blowing out a cloud of fragrant smoke.

Without a word, he rose from his chair and going to a cabinet, brought out a small decanter and glasses. Setting them on the table, he drew his chair near, filled the glasses, threw his head back so as to keep his eyes on the daggers, and began.

"I never believed in spiritualism, occultism, or any other heathenism, Rob; and I don't say that I've changed my mind or my views regarding them one and all, but something strange has twice happened to me, and I'd

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like to have some one to explain it—if they can. It was about the time you went to Jamaica that the first of these two things happened; let's see, yes, it was three years ago, that makes me right.

"I was sitting here in this same room at just about this time in the evening. Nellie was over at Grattley's, and I had promised to call for her at eleven. I sat in this chair and looked out of the window at the lights and stars, and after a while noticed that the evening star seemed particularly bright, looking for all the world like an electric light hung above the hills.

"I began to conjure up all sorts of ideas regarding it, wondering if it was inhabited, and if it was, what the people were like.

"Of course you have heard the theory that a man can hypnotise himself sometimes by looking at an object long and steadily, especially if the object be placed or held in such a position that it is a strain to keep it in sight. Well, I had fallen back in the chair and grown drowsy, but my mind still persisted in dwelling on the planet, and my speculations in no wise abated with the desire for sleep, but my thoughts grew confused, and presently I must have fallen asleep.

"Yet it seemed to me that it was a gradual transition from one state of life to another; I seemed to drift from the material things of this life into the spiritual ones of another. That is the only way I can explain it to you, for I really did not lose consciousness, but simply changed my point of observation, and began to look on new and strange scenes.

"I seemed to be walking leisurely along a handsome street in a strange city; the myriad lights sparkled and glittered along either side, and down the middle extended a broad tree-shaded footpath. Public places of entertainment and refreshment lined the sides, in front of which sat hundreds of people laughing, talking and drinking. I recall being impressed with the resemblance of the street to one of the avenues of Paris.

"The dress of the people banished the thought as it came. Their garb was a tunic and hose, belt and sandals for the men, while the women were arrayed in a style closely resembling the classic drapery of ancient Greece, and were bejewelled in dazzling splendour.

"Such a prodigal display of wealth no Arabian Nights' entertainer ever dared dream of; diamonds and rubies; sapphires and emeralds were everywhere in reckless profusion; even the goblet from which I quaffed a delicious drink when I sank on to a divan just without the portals of an elaborate place full of the sounds of exquisite singing, was thickly encrusted with them. I felt no surprise at my surroundings. It all seemed familiar to me, yet I could not identify it.

"No one paid any attention to me as I sat there enjoying myself.

"I was suddenly aroused from my reverie by a commotion near at hand, and turning my head quickly, observed with a shock that a desperate encounter was taking place behind me.

"A young man was standing with his back against the wall, a dagger uplifted in his hand, while before him were three adversaries, each trying to distract his attention in order that the others might finish him.

"A great crowd surrounded them, but no one offered him aid. I saw at a glance that it was but a question of seconds ere his one blow would be drawn, and the *coup de grâce* given.

"My blood boiled in that instant at the unfairness of the fight, and I sprang to my feet. With one bound, I had thrown myself at the nearest man and caught him by the legs, and as we came to the earth in a heap, myself underneath, I heard the thud of a dagger as it was buried in his back.

"In an instant I was on my feet, but not a fraction of a second too soon to evade a desperate blow aimed at me by one of the survivors. As I dropped and he swung past me, the young man, with a movement like a flash, struck his dagger to the hilt between his shoulders, and as he fell I drew it out quickly and faced the one remaining foeman.

"He made no effort to escape, but faced us both with astounding bravery. At this exhibition of cool nerve I took a step backward, leaving him with the man I had been championing.

"The encounter was brief, and the last of the three fell dead on the marble floor.

"From the time I sprang from my chair to the end could not have exceeded two minutes, and at its conclusion, the victor, his face wreathed in smiles, came to me and took my hand in silent gratitude. He then placed his arm in mine and we peacefully left the place.

"Not a soul interfered; not one but gave a cheer as we passed, and yet not one had offered my companion assistance against his apparently overwhelming odds.

"My new-found friend thanked me for my timely aid, and chatted amiably with me in a tongue that I had never heard before in my life, and yet I understood perfectly!

"Now mark; the place was strange, yet familiar; the language I had never heard before in my life, and yet I understood its every syllable, and talked with him in it as if it were my native tongue.

"Mechanically I thrust the dagger I carried through the waistband of my trousers, giving it no further thought. After a short stroll we came to a splendid house within a spacious garden, and entered. In a room off the hall, we disposed ourselves on couches, while numerous handsome girls served wine and cigarettes, somewhat after the Turkish style.

"As my friend reclined upon his couch smoking, and while the strains of beautiful music floated in on the redolent air, he took occasion to renew his thanks, and to add that if at any time or place I needed him and earnestly called him by his name, which was 'Tolia,' he would be instantly at my side.

"Under the combined influence of the wine, the smoke, the heavy fragrance of the atmosphere, and the dreamy music, a drowsiness overcame me, and I fell into a deep and dreamless slumber, which was only broken by a mellow chime, and upon opening my eyes, still having in mind my experience, my astonishment may be imagined when I found myself sitting in my chair in this room, awakened by yonder clock striking eleven.

"Recollecting my appointment to call for Nellie, I rubbed my eyes, jumped up, and was off in a moment, the realism of my dream clinging to me as I went. This I was notable to banish, and I explained my abstraction to Nellie by telling her that I had fallen asleep. When we reached home and I was preparing to retire, still thinking of the vivid dream, something fell from my clothes to the floor. It was shadowy in that part of the room, and I brought the lamp.

"Before me, on the floor lay the dagger of my dream!

"It were useless to try and tell you of the emotions engendered by the sight of the actual presence of this object of my fancied dream, a thing that I could no longer believe merely a dream. I slept little that

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night, nor for months could I forget it long enough to do any deep work. It never left me for more than an hour at a time.

"Nellie is a sensible girl, and after a while I told her of the circumstances under which I came into possession of the weapon."

"Don't you suppose you could account for it by an attempt at burglary?" I asked, excitedly.

"Would a burglar deliberately come and stick a valuable weapon in my waistband?" he queried disdainfully.

"That's true," I replied, thoughtfully, not a little wrought up over the uncanny tale.

"But you have heard only half the story; there's a sequel," he said; "and when I have finished I think you will be more puzzled than ever, but you wanted to hear it, and I don't do things by halves, besides, I'm getting interested myself."

"A sequel!" I cried. "Oh, do go on with it."

He smiled as he refilled his empty glass, then, having moistened his rather husky throat and lighting a fresh cigar, continued:

"That happened three years ago. I had not forgotten it by a good deal, and many an hour have Nellie and I spent in trying to understand it, but whatever theories we evolved were as quickly dissipated by some new idea. Of course where all was mere guesswork, and nothing could be proved these discussions were endless in their possibilities of scope.

"Last autumn we were returning from a trip through Canada with Bennett's family. I left Nellie to come on alone with them, while I joined a party of friends from different points for a three weeks' hunt.

"There were about twenty of us in the party, and we made as pretty a camp as you ever laid your eyes on, about seventy miles south of the railway.

"There was no lack of game, and we got a couple of bears, after we had been on the ground a week. We had a glorious time and for those three weeks I forgot all about that dagger.

"But the end came and we were to break camp on the morrow. I had been off on a long jaunt after a cinnamon with two cubs that I had spied early in the day, but, losing the trail, I was making my way back to the camp along the edge of a deep gorge with the creek a good five hundred feet below me, when I heard a stone fall into the cañon, and stopping quickly looked for the cause.

"Directly in front of me, about thirty yards away, were two men, the worst looking cut-throats I had ever had the misfortune to see in all my life, and as I made this mental observation, I found myself looking straight along the barrel of a Winchester in the hands of the one in advance.

"'Throw up your hands!' he said in tones of calm desperation.

"Now, Bob, I am no coward, but I know what the order means when the one who gives it has good backing, and I didn't waste a second, I assure you. There is always time enough to learn the why and wherefore later; that is if you don't stop too long to try and reason it out before hand. As I stood there with my hands over my head, the smaller of the two came quickly towards me under cover of his partner's rifle, pulling a cord out of his pocket as he advanced.

"Close inspection intensified the brutish face, and I was not the happiest man in the world as he proceeded to pull my arms down and tie them.

"A cornered man can think pretty quick, and he is apt to take desperate chances. I asked myself why two men should want to tie one simply to rob him, and I answered the question like lightning.

"'Dead men tell no tales!'

"They meant to kill me as a finishing job.

"He had one arm down as I thought this, and when he reached for the other, I reasoned that if I suddenly whirled and knocked him down, his partner would riddle me before I could turn. Well, I did whirl, but I had him in a bear-like hug between me and the other before the latter could wink an eye.

"Then came a pretty struggle for my rifle, while the other fellow covered the thirty yards between us, yelling to throw me over the cliff. That was easy enough to say but I was the better man, and would have sent his partner there in a jiffy if it had not been for the fact that the act would have been my death-knell.

"It doesn't take a man long to run thirty yards, and I had not succeeded in getting that rifle when he reached us and aimed a blow at my head with the evident intention of knocking that useful member clear across the gulch. But I slid aside and let my friend have it.

"The blow was a good one, and I held a dead man in my arms. In an instant the big one lowered his rifle, and in another I had dropped my man and had the barrel in my hands. But here I found my master. He was a giant, and he threw me round like a baby.

"We fought for that rifle like wild beasts for flesh, and we were perilously near the edge of the cañon. I was growing weak, while my opponent's strength seemed to increase with his rage, and he was forcing me toward the edge of the precipice!

"I tried to regain my lost ground, but I might have as well fought against a grizzly. I felt that it would be all over in a few seconds, but still I fought on.

"At that moment, when hope had forsaken me, and my ebbing courage almost fled, the thought of the friend of my dream came into my confused ideas, and I quietly, without definite notion of what I was doing, called:

"'Tolia—Tolia! come to me now!'

"The words had scarcely left my lips when there suddenly appeared, solidified from the thin air of the mountains, a figure in white; a keen-bladed dagger flashed in the air and then sunk to the hilt between the shoulders of my gigantic adversary!

"As he fell, I staggered towards my preserver, he caught my hand, and bowing his head over it in silence, touched it with his lips. The strain had been too much for me and I fell in a half swoon, I had not wholly fainted, but lay there to recover from my exhaustion.

"After ten minutes I was all right once more, and raising my head, looked about me. On one side lay the man with the crushed skull; nearer at hand, the brute who had nearly finished me, the dagger projecting from his back. Not another thing was in sight. My friend had vanished as he came.

"I withdrew the dagger and made my way to camp. The next day we came home. I did not mention my adventure to my friends. When I saw Nellie, I told her the whole story. You now know as much about it as either of us. If you can, I should like to have you explain it; neither of us can. There are the two daggers above your head."

CLAUDE MATHERSON.

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The Bride of Faliero.

THE palace of the Doge of Venice was flaming with lights and brilliant with colour, ablaze with torches and lamps, and gay with the sounds of festival music, and with the gorgeousness of magnificent costumes, flashing jewels, velvet masks, and lovely flowers, and merry with the company of gallant cavaliers and beautiful women intoxicated with the whirl of the dance.

Marino Faliero, the Doge of Venice, received his guests with all his natural pride and haughtiness of manner, blended with the condescending gallantry toward the ladies, and urbanity toward the gentlemen, that was characteristic of his imperious nature.

He had been Doge of Venice scarcely more than seven months, and was a man then of seventy-six years of age, but never man looked back upon a larger course of magnificent triumphs during a lifetime than he.

He had been a soldier, and had routed the King of Hungary and his eighty thousand men with less effort than many a commander requires to put a squad through the ordinary military evolutions.

He had been commander of the fleet. He had been Ambassador at Genoa, and at Rome, and while there it was that he received news of his election to the dignity of Doge.

His was not a nature of simplicity and gentle dignity, and by long years of command his fiery spirit had been raised to an arrogant imperiousness, that had finally become a passion sweeping everything before it.

His courage was that of the magnificent wild beasts of the forest, but not so his magnanimity. He allowed no rival to stand in his way, nor was any opponent of sufficiently small consequence to escape his vindictive notice. He had but one vulnerable point—his young and lovely wife.

Among the brilliant company of masqueraders was a young man of noble blood and handsome person and fine bearing. At length, during the festivities, this youth of patrician birth, having looked too many times upon the wine when it was red, too many times did his gaze fall upon the bewildering beauty of one of the Dogessa's ladies in waiting. He whispered his ardent admiration into her unwilling ear, and her real or feigned displeasure attracted the Doge, who witnessed the scene. With eyes aflame he stepped forward, and commanded him to instantly withdraw from the scene of the festivities.

This public insult because of what he, the offender, who was Michael Steno, pleased to consider but a trifling indecorum, infuriated him, and he withdrew as he was commanded, only to put his wits to work to devise some way of avenging so great an insult to his pride.

At length, after wandering about some time, he found himself alone in the Senate hall, and there across the throne in the dim light, Steno wrote with a piece of chalk a few words that were destined to bring about a tragedy such as even he at that moment little dreamed of.

After writing those staring words full of insulting significance, he quietly went away. The evening passed far into the morning hours, and just before daybreak the guests departed.

The inscription written across the front of the throne first met the horrified gaze of an official of the palace, whom it confronted as he entered the Senate chamber the next morning, and he, affrighted, sought his master.

No words can describe the wrath and unbounded fury of Faliero, as, hastening to the chamber, he beheld the daring insult. That the young and beautiful Dogessa was as spotless as virgin snow is not doubted, but the malicious and cowardly innuendo took the desired effect, and the mind of Faliero was poisoned by the malicious shaft, whose wound was more than he could bear. It

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was not difficult to decide who was the probable offender. Faliero had not forgotten the infamous conduct of Steno, and upon him the accusation of this dastardly deed was laid.

Officers were instantly sent out, and Michael Steno was arrested and brought up before his peers. The task of the tribunal of the forty was not hard, for Steno at once admitted the offence, and stood for judgment with all the monchalance of impudent moral indifference, and left the facts to answer for themselves. The words he had written were in effect these:

"The Doge has a beautiful and young wife, but she is not for him."

Steno was sentenced to two months' imprisonment, which was to be followed by twelve months of exile.

The only fault to be found with this sentence was its exceeding lack of severity, yet to a patrician, a dungeon cell and a year of banishment was a penance bitter to be endured; but Faliero was beside himself with insulted rage because of the lenity of the sentence.

Nothing could have satisfied him other than the beheading of Steno, which punishment, according to his own judgment, Steno richly deserved for so gross a misdemeanor, and Faliero had expected nothing less than this from the decree of the tribunal.

He was stung to the quick because of what seemed to him added insult that Steno was to get off so easily, and he turned his fury from Steno himself to the signory, who had, he believed, betrayed their trust, in order to shield Steno because of his noble birth.

At once and instantly the entire patrician order loomed up before his wrath-distorted vision as a hydra-headed foe before which he, for the first time in all his triumphal life, felt his own impotence. He longed for super-human power that he might with one sweep of the knife sever that hydra-head of his foe and thus put out of existence the signory of Venice, but how could he do this, how might it be brought about, for rest he would not until he had in some way accomplished it.

Like Caligula, he sat brooding over his wrongs.

That evening, as he was alone in his chamber, stern and gloomy and resentful, and full of malice toward those he believed his enemies, a man came on foot and breathless to the gates of the palace and asked to see Marino Faliero at once, as he desired to speak with him regarding a case of justice. Faliero bade them show the man in, and a moment later the stranger stood in his presence.

That he was a plebian was evident from his dress and general appearanc. His face was bruised and blood-stained, and his clothes betokened something like a hand-to-hand encounter with an enemy. He was fairly bursting with wrathful emotion and shaking with the force of the anger that was consuming him. As soon as he found himself in the presence of Faliero he burst into an uncontrollable torrent of impossible speech.

"And who are you?" demanded Faliero, as soon as the flood of the man's tempestuous words could be stayed.

"I am Israel Bertuccio," he replied.

"And your complaint is—"

"I am a workman in the arsenal, and I bear on my face the imprint of the blow given by one who came demanding the service of my men in his own private behalf, and to him I returned answer that he could not have them since they were already engaged in the government's employ and upon its ships, whereupon he struck me full in the face, and I am come hither to learn if I may not be avenged. I appeal for justice!"

"For justice," replied Faliero, with bitter sarcasm, "justice and against one of the signory! That even I cannot procure for myself!"

"Then let us find a way to avenge ourselves!" said Bertuccio, savagely.

An idea struck Faliero. He had in this man an able weapon. Through him might be brought about exactly what he desired of all things to be wrought—revenge upon the signory of Venice!

He found that Bertuccio belonged to a brotherhood—a secret order, and that all his class regarded the signory as implacable enemies. They had been stung by wrongs, and were driven to a spirit of willingness to adopt almost any means to avenge themselves. The hour had come, they would endure no more; this last insult to himself, Bertuccio declared, should serve as the incitement inspiring others to take action for their rights and for justice.

Nothing could have delighted Faliero's secret soul more than did this information. Revolt of the lower classes seemed imminent; why should not the lower classes serve him in this his hour of need, and become his strength and power in this the time of his greatest impotence.

Hours wore away, and Marino Faliero and Bertuccio still remained closeted in secret conference. The night wore to daybreak, and the day lengthened toward another night and yet these two strangely-united confederates sat perfecting their plans. When finally Bertuccio took his leave it was beyond midnight, and the understanding was that he should return the following night.

He came according to appointment, but he did not come alone. His companion was a sculptor, by name, Filippo Calendro.

The Doge and his nephew, Bertuce Faliero, were waiting for them. And together these four laid their plans for one of the most tremendous and vengeful schemes that ever emanated from the brain of man, and the beginning of one of the heaviest tragedies in the history of the world.

Three days were deemed sufficient in which to complete all preparations and on the 15th of April the plans were to be carried out.

The scheme was this, sixteen of the most bloodthirsty of the order were to be chosen as leaders, and each leader was to choose sixteen followers, and arm them to the teeth.

At daybreak on April 15th the bell of St. Mark's, which never struck except by the command of the Doge, was to ring out a loud alarm; at this signal the sixty-four conspirators, rushing from various parts of the city were to come together at St. Mark's, shouting aloud the exciting news that the Genoese fleet had been descried at sea.

The senators, who would be aroused by the tumult would at once come to council, and at that moment, while they were assembled in the piazza, they would be hewn down together, not a man being spared.

Everything went well with the conspirators. Their men were well and wisely chosen and ably drilled, and victory seemed promised to them. All would have gone admirably had it not been for the troublesome conscience of one man who had been shown many personal favours by one of the senators. He hesitated and wavered, and a thousand times was minded to go to Lioni, his benefactor, and warn him against impending danger, but

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his hesitation he kept carefully concealed, for were there not watchful eyes and vengeful hearts, and hands ready to plunge the knife into his vacillating heart at the least sign of treachery on his part?

At last the long expected day came to a close. Upon the following morning the signal would be sounded and the dire deed would be consummated.

It was now midnight. Faliero was sleepless; he was impatient for his vengeance. He paced the floor and watched the flight of the moments.

As the clock struck twelve, a figure shrouded in black disguise, slipped from by-way to by-way like a shadow, and made its way to Lioni's dwelling.

It was Bertrando, the traitor to his order, and him of the troubled conscience, who could no longer hold out against its pleadings, come to warn his patron and benefactor that haste must be made instantly, or the blood of the senators would flood the stones of the piazza,

He roused the household of Lioni and tried to warn them in a few words and escape; but a torrent of questions met his information. They could not understand the necessity for mystery; why did he not speak out? They evidently suspected him of treachery.

Even Lioni grew suspicious of his fond solicitation and ordered him held until he grew more explicit.

There was no other way out of it, Bertrando saw that plainly, and to clear himself he determined to uncloak himself, turn King's evidence, and have his reward. He threw off his disguise and stood forth as a hero and a saviour among them, but first he secured Lioni's pledge for his own personal safety, not only, but for his reward. This Lioni readily gave.

Lioni was paralyzed with horror and amazement. As he listened his amazement rivalled his horror. He ordered Bertrando to be held a prisoner, and he himself hurried out in the darkness of the night to arouse the other members of the senate.

The first two he aroused stealthily hastened to the other senators, and they all went to a chamber in St. Saviour's Convent, and sent for Bertrando, and in a body listened to the same story that he had told to Lioni.

Guards were sent out to the palace of the Doge, and also to St. Mark's.

At the hour when Faliero was expecting to hear the great bell ring out the signal for the execution of the fiendish plot, there came the sound of the tramping of feet, and before he could realize what had happened he was seized and held a prisoner. At the same time the chief confederates were seized by the guards and hurried to the Convent.

To add to the further complication they had been taken even while their weapons were in their hands.

A rack was also brought, and under its tortures their lips found utterance, and they told everything, then they were removed to cells, and shortly afterward an excited crowd of spectators saw their bodies swinging from a gibbet in the gallery of the palace overlooking the piazza.

Over four hundred of their conspirators were also discovered, but did not at once meet their just punishment.

Great and formal preparations were begun for the punishment of Faliero befitting his crime.

A council of ten was formed, by whom crimes against the state were tried, and these ten elected twenty of the signory who should sit with them in consultation. The court of thirty judges was called the Giunta.

At eventide Faliero was led into the hall of council and stood face to face with those whose wholesale massacre he had planned.

It was a pitiful but dramatic scene. Marino Faliero looked about him and saw many there whom, as his guests, he had greeted at the brilliant festivities of so short a time before at the palace. Lips that had smiled upon him there were now muttering imprecations upon him, and every eye looked upon him with the fires of hatred burning within them.

The scene would have moved some men to a softened emotion, brought thus face to face with those, who, had not his schemes been thwarted, would now have been in eternity; many men would have been overcome by the realization of stupendousness of the awful crime from which their hands had been stayed, but not so with Faliero.

In this supreme moment of his downfall and humiliation, and with the penalty of his attempted deed confronting him, he retained all his usual haughty demeanour, and all the fiery vindictiveness that had had possession of him, was now but redoubled, since all was lost to him. There was, perhaps, something sublime in his indifference to everything of this world. He had lost all; he had nothing more to lose, and what remained now was but the death-dealing vengeance of those to whom he would have dealt out the same.

The place of execution was chosen to be the Giants' Stairs, the place where succeeding Doges were invested with the robe and crown of state, midst all customary pomp. Besides this it was agreed that the place for Faliero's portrait in the council hall should be left vacant and veiled in black.

It was now midnight again. At daybreak he must die.

At that hour all Venice was abroad. Men sought for places round about the piazza at the grated bars because from there the topmost stair could be seen, and the topmost stair was the exact spot where, only a few brief months before, Marino Faliero had been crowned. It was now draped in black. The gates below the Giants' Stairs were closed.

In the centre of the top stair of the piazza rested the block and sword.

At the break of day the procession issued forth from the palace and approached the landing in the following order; the ten came first, the members of the senate and the forty; then walked a guard of soldiers, and after them Marino Faliero.

At his right was his confessor with the crucifix in his right hand; at the left hand of the Doge walked the headsman.

They reached the block, and the headsman swept the crown from the head of the fallen Doge, and the mantle of sovereignty from his shoulders.

As he did so then came the first solemn peal of St. Mark's bell that was to toll the knell of his death. As the great brazen tongue clanged a second time he cast himself on his knees and placed his head upon the block.

An instant later the gates were opened amidst the tumultuous shouts of the crowd and the blood of Marino Faliero's headless body drenched the stairs of the spot, where only a few short weeks before he stood vested in the robes of official dignity, amid the acclaim of the throngs and the cheers of the multitude, and where little children had cast their votive offerings of fragrant flowers upon the Giant' Stairs, his head came rolling downward toward the gates.

Luici Cenci.

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BOOK III.—CONCERNING THE RULE OF KING OLERON.

CHAPTER III.

How the three Europeans built a villa residence, replete with many modern conveniences: and how they re-invented things they had been familiar with all their lives through.

It was the morning after King Oleron's feast, and our trio were engaged in making themselves a residence which accorded more with their European tastes. They had made up their minds that a stay on the island was inevitable, at any rate for an indefinite time, and perhaps for ever.

"There's worse places to lay one's bones in than Erma," the Irishman had observed, "although 'tisn't exactly anxious I am to spend the balance of me days here. There's hapes o' little things one'd like, an' can't get. But 'if yez can't be aisy,' so me father used to say when he was hidin' in the woods, 'be as aisy as yez can.' An' bein' me father's favourite son, that's what I intend to do. So, shipmates both, I propose we build us a house fit to live in, an' not a shanty like this one here, where the walls are only put up to help inthruders to get inside."

"This is an excellent framework to start upon," remarked Sneyd, pointing to their present abode. "With a little adding to, it will answer capitally."

The rustic house was situated in a narrow valley. The trees on the steep hill sides sheltered them. A merrily tinkling stream ran before their door. The place smiled with lovely tropical flowers. Yet Nature was the only landscape gardener who had touched it.

They all felt that it was impossible to conceive a fairer spot.

"Well, Sandy, lad!" exclaimed the Irishman, "yez haven't had yer say. There's something on yer mind."

"I was thinking," said Sandy slowly, "what would happen supposing these good people took offence at anything we did, and came down the valley and set upon us?"

"Why, it's kilt we should be! though perhaps a good handful of them 'ud get knocked on the head before we were settled an' done for. But 'don't go for to conjure up a black bogie when the sun's shinin',' as his honour the King remarked yesterday."

"I don't want to. But still there is no harm in looking at possibilities ahead. These aboriginal people are proverbially fickle. Now, do you see that ledge a couple of hundred yards up the hill-side yonder? I've had my eye on it for some time, and the day before yesterday went up to look at it. The rocks are steep below and unclimbable, but there's one path which leads to it at an easy slope. Once there, you'll find the ledge bigger than it looks from here. It's a hundred feet at least, and quite fifty yards long. At the back the rock rises up almost sheer. There are trees enough on the ledge for shelter, and a spring of good water spouts up amongst them. We should be cooler with our headquarters there, for what breeze there is we should be certain to catch; and, besides, we should be on healthier ground. These mists that rise in the valley at nights chill one to the bone, and cannot but be liable to do harm. They breed fevers and calentures, so I've read in Dr. Menteith's book, and once these diseases or agues get into the system, they're never thoroughly shaken out."

"We've been healthy enough so far," said O'Neill, "but it was bred in a bog I was myself, and so perhaps I'm hardened to mists an' moisture."

"An abode that would serve as a fort on occasion isn't to be despised," observed Sneyd thoughtfully. "Sandy's right. These islanders are friendly enough at present; but they might turn round on us. If that blear-eyed Ebry thought it to his advantage to do so, I've no doubt he's got influence enough to stir up a strong feeling in our disfavour."

"But," objected O'Neill, "it would look suspicious if we started building a fort. They're sharp enough. They'd twig it at once. And when they saw we distrusted 'em, why, they'd very likely give us reason for distrust."

"Who spoke of a regular fort, man?" laughed Sneyd. "Sandy didn't mean us to build a redoubt with a glacis, and embrasures to put guns in. We haven't any guns to mount in 'em, if we did build the fort. What he meant was that the ledge was strong by nature, and if the need came, we could block the one path which leads to it, and hold the place easily against a considerable force. Meanwhile the house will be an ordinary house to us and to all observers. It will be situated on high ground, which we believe, very sensibly, to be healthier than the low. And if we have a few hundred feet farther to walk into the rest of the village, well, that is our own look-out, and nobody else need grumble."

"'Sense triumphs over ignorance,' to quote his honour the King again," said the Irishman. "I suppose there's no paper to be signed for ground rint. We may as well go off and look at the demesne at once."

The "demesne," as O'Neill chose to term it, proved very much as Sandy had described. Natural fissures, which very little labour would make a neat path, zig-zagged up the face of the cliff, and the little plateau was barely five minutes

walk from their present habitation. Half of the little level flat was one thick jungle of rich, rank, tropical vegetation, which, as Sneyd showed, might be easily cleared away to make room for taro, feeiis, or other crops. The rest of the ground was occupied by a banana clump, with the great leaves torn to tremulous ribbons by the constant breath of the trade-wind. The natural space, formed by half-a-dozen trees which had fallen in some storm and lay rotting on the ground in the middle of this little copse, offered a convenient site for the hut. The foliage overhead would form a cool shelter from the sun, and away down through an aisle of tree-trunks, they commanded a view of the low mangrove-fringed shore, the calm lagoon, the white breakers which ever thundered on the reef, and beyond, the restless waters of the deep blue Pacific Ocean.

But the trio did not waste time in admiring all the wealth of beauty around them. Opportunity enough for that hereafter. With sheath-knives they cut the lianes, which twined and intertwined everywhere, and with strong arms they lifted away the litter of those and of the prone, dead trees, piling the whole into an indiscriminate heap, and converting it into a smoking, self-destroying bonfire. It took a couple of days to get the ground cleared, for tropical vegetation grows apace, and the luxurious wealth of undergrowth was almost a solid mass. Then they set to work cutting bamboos on the lower ground, stripping off the delicate, green foliage, docking them to various lengths, and transporting them on to the plateau.

By a unanimous vote of the other two, Sandy had been chosen architect. There had been various discussions as to what form their house should take, and Sneyd and O'Neill had propounded several plans, all more or less unsuitable. But when each had had his say, Sandy produced a piece of bark, on the white inner surface of which was a rude sketch done in charcoal. It represented a house, modified somewhat from those of the islanders, but still on the native lines. There were two rooms in it, each fifteen feet square. There was an eight-foot-wide verandah round them, and the whole was covered by a high-pitched roof, thatched with leaves. Each room was to have a doorway, and two shuttered windows. The walls were to be high, and made of wattle, faced on the inside with broad leaves. And the space above the cross-rafters would serve as a store. One room would be amply large enough for three hammocks. The other room was for a day-dwelling. Or they could sit under the wide verandah.

The other two were enraptured with the plan. "Sandy, bhoy!" cried O'Neill, "av King Solomon could have got yez when he was putting up the pyramids, 'tis a dale handsomer an' usefuller he'd have made 'em when he was about it."

They set about building without hesitation, as soon as the poles were cut, and in a couple of days the framework of the dwelling was complete. The wattling of the walls with flexible lianes, the making of doors and window-shutters, and the thatching of the roof with broad banana leaves, was a far longer process. But by constant hard work in early mornings and cool evenings, with a rest during the midday heat, these matters were completed—bamboo floors were laid down, and the internal walls covered with a smooth layer of the great leaves, which improved both their appearance and utility.

The house was finished. A flowery creeper sprouting almost visibly, had twined itself round a verandah support, and covered a large patch of the roof. Everything was ready for a shift of quarters. So, burdening themselves with their one or two household utensils—the hammocks, a few calabashes, and a smouldering stick—they moved in forthwith, and settled themselves down for a prolonged residence.

They set about building without hesitation.

By daytime they worked at clearing the ground destined for their crops of its tangled growth of bush and scrub, a lengthy and tedious process; at tilling the soil as best they could with the rude instruments at their disposal; at getting hold of their daily food in one way and another, and preparing it as best they could. In evenings, when the moon's yellow rays or the silver starlight stole through the interlacing tree-tops, they busied themselves with making one thing and another—chairs, tables, and what not. The light was feeble, and, like blind men, they worked mostly by feel and touch. Their tools consisted of their sheath-knives alone. Their material was mostly bamboo, jointed, mortised, and pegged with laborious care.

O'Neill was the cleverest carpenter. Sailors can turn their hands to anything, from painting a figure-head to making elaborate mats for the cabin door. And where neatness was required he was well to the front, although Sandy was not far behind him. But Sneyd's more varied experience of household furniture led him to make useful suggestions and designs that the other two would never have thought of.

The ex-cornet's reading came back to him, moreover, and by dint of countless hard raps at the door of his memory, he was able to call to mind how certain things of ordinary everyday English use were made or procured.

Take pottery as an instance.

There was not such a thing as a piece of delf in the whole island of Erma; but clay existed; and Sneyd knew that delf was made out of clay. How these last two facts were connected he couldn't think at first, but the details of the process came back to him little by little, and having got his inspiration he proceeded to act on it. A bluff of stiff white clay existed in the valley; that he knew. So he set himself about designing a potter's wheel. The making of this with the primitive appliances at his command was beyond him; but Sandy and the Irishman caught up the

Mytto was watching Mr. Sneyd at his toilette, and wondering over it.

idea, and produced a rude but effective apparatus such as he required.

Manipulating the clay was the next thing to be learnt, and this was not done in a day. But by dint of doggedly sticking to the task, vessels were at length produced, which, not exactly beautiful, were at least of useful shapes.

The next thing was to burn them; and many were the futile attempts before a suitable kiln was produced. But at last all obstacles were overcome, and the first bit of pottery ever made on Erma was produced. That it was misshapen, dirty-brick red, and porous, is true; but the makers viewed it with satisfaction, and the natives looked upon it with admiring awe.

"Av we'd only got a glim to light us while we shmoke our pipes," sighed O'Neill one evening when the sky was overcast, and the verandah was clothed in Stygian darkness.

"Are you sticking the pipe stem in your eye?" Sneyd asked him.

"Ah no, 'tisn't that. I can grope the way to me potatythrap aisy enough. But it's so lonesome sittin' like a litter of foxes in the dark. We'd be merrie by ten times wid an incho' candle to see one another spake wid."

"Have a fire lit," suggested Sandy.

"Too hot."

"Yes," said Sneyd thoughtfully; "I wish we could contrive a lamp of some sort. A torch would do at a pinch, a torch of resinous wood. But then there doesn't happen to be any resinous wood on the island so far as I've discovered. And there's no fat to be got hold of either, or we'd soon make some rushlights. No, I don't see how it is to be contrived. The islanders turn in soon after sundown, and don't need it, but I must confess to a sneaking love for sitting up after dark. At the present moment, now, I want to finish cutting out this spoon, and here I am at a dead lock for want of light to see what I'm doing."

There was silence for a minute or so which Sandy broke by saying, "I've heard o cocoanut oil. Do either of you know how it's made?"

Neither of them did, so Sandy went on. "It must come either from the shell or the milk, or the white solid stuff; and of the three, the last seems most likely. But the question is how?"

"Boil it in water," suggested Sneyd.

"Squash it," said the Irishman.

"We might try both," said Sandy meditatively. "If the oil's there, either process ought to bring it out."

It was found impossible to conduct the decocting process on a large enough scale for practical use, and so squeezing was decided upon.

The first thing to be done was to make a press. This took some thought, but eventually one was made from cocoanut tree itself. A section of trunk some three feet long was cut out, and the pith extracted. One end of the hollow cylinder thus obtained was plugged securely, save for a small orifice intended as an exit for the oil, should any deign to appear. A piston of solid wood was fitted to the cylinder, and a stout tree some twenty feet long was rigged lever-fashion, so that it could exert great downward force on the upper end of the piston.

The cylinder was packed full of the white contents of old nuts, the piston placed into position, and pressure applied. The contents were compressed to a certain degree, and then weights were fastened to the end of the lever so that the enormous squeezing power would be continuous; after which the apparatus was left. This was at night. By next morning the experimenters were delighted by the sight of a quart of yellowish semi-solid oil—it looked very like butter—in their receptacle; and of a further supply oozing in drop by drop. In the evening it was tested as a luminant. A half cocoanut held a wick of wild cotton fastened to a supporter of delf, and drawing sustenance from oil below. It lighted certainly, and gave out a yellow, smoking flame. The result was not very brilliant, but it was a vast improvement on the era of utter darkness that had gone before it; and so it was prized accordingly.

This, too, was received by the natives with feelings in which astonishment was mingled with awe. The palm tree had been most things to them before—it was the source of more than half the articles they had in daily use—but, otherwise than by burning it bodily, they had never extracted illumination from it. And now that they saw how this could be done, they marvelled much, and revered the white man's genius more than ever.

CHAPTER IV.

How Erman sorcery failed to make water run uphill: how Murtagh O'Neill solved a simple problem in hydrostatics: how matrimony was suggested: and how a festival was interrupted by the ominous arrival of Dajian emissaries.

Mr. Laurence Sneyd was engaged in washing his hands. The dressing-room of his establishment was situate under

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the back of the verandah. There was a large basin with water laid on from the spring through bamboo pipes, which terminated in a bamboo stop-cock. There was a dressing-table, also of bamboo; and on it there were hair-brushes and tooth-brushes, made from fibrous palm stems, which had been slightly unravelled, and then served round with a fibre lashing, to prevent their unravelling further. Add three combs, fabricated from the inevitable bamboo, and you have the whole of the dressing-table.

Mytto was watching Mr. Sneyd at his toilette, and wondering over it. Mytto admired the white men intensely, and rendered sincerest flattery by imitating them in every way that lay in his power; and at present Mytto was wrapped up in awe by the sight of the water-supply. When he wanted to wash his date-coloured skin, he went down to the stream; or else he journeyed a little further, and indulged in a swim in the lagoon. He always went to the water, as his forbears had done before him. So this notion of making the water come to you appealed to him with great force. And the idea was so simple too—as, in good sooth, most valuable mechanical ideas are.

So Mytto took himself off, and busied himself during the next few days in cutting lengths of bamboo with an obsidian knife, and jointing them into a continuous pipe, whereof one end lay in a running stream and the other led to his own front door.

But, to Mytto's dismay, no gushing fountain of water answered his call. Everything was like the white man's. Bamboo tap and all were an exact copy of the original. The machine seemed perfect; the result alone was wanting.

Mytto had not been working on the quiet. The whole of the scattered village knew what he was about, and when the last length of piping was laid in place, there was a strong audience in attendance.

Mytto hailed to them when he made the last connection, and they one and all pressed eagerly forward, to see the first supply spout forth—as crowds will do for similarly unmomentous reason. But there was no gushing stream of cool, sparkling water; it didn't even trickle gently; in fact not a drop appeared.

The crowd looked disappointed, and turned to Mytto for an explanation. Mytto scratched his head perplexedly, gazed at his handiwork, but could not see wherein the fault lay. It was, as far as he could make out, an exact counterpart of the white men's on the Ledge higher up the valley. The problem was beyond his powers to solve.

Just then, as fortune would have it, another spectator joined himself to the outskirts of the crowd. He was one of Ebry's assistant sorcercers—the taller of the two.

Mytto saw him, and was imbued with a happy idea. He beckoned to the melancholy-looking knock-kneed man, who came to the front, nothing doubting. Mytto explained the situation, said the pipe-line was an exact counterpart of the original, and asked for a reason why it wouldn't act.

The assistant sorcerer pondered awhile, with his face hidden in a corner of his *tappa* robe, and then pronounced that the white men had uttered a spell over their tube, which had set it a-going.

"Then," said Mytto, "will you say a similar spell over mine?"

The assistant sorcerer felt himself somewhat cornered. "I know not the white men's spell," he observed.

The crowd, fickle as aboriginal crowds usually are, began to murmur. They were losing faith in their assistant sorcerer.

"Why," exclaimed Mytto in surprise, "if you do not know their spell, then are the white men more powerful than you?"

"Not so," replied the knock-kneed man, making what he considered a bold stroke. "But the white men's spells are different from ours."

"They must be more powerful," suggested Mytto.

"They are not so," repeated the assistant sorcerer, feeling that he must uphold his own branch of the profession.

"Then," said Mytto simply, "say that which will make the pipe-line carry water, and pour it out through the tap."

The assistant sorcerer might have anticipated so obvious a retort, but he was not prepared to meet it.

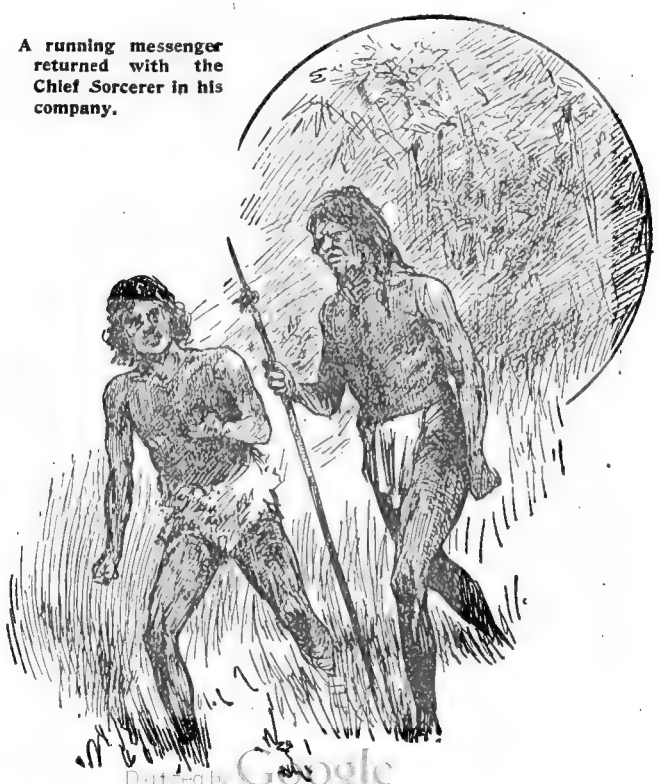
The whole profession of sorcery on Erma was at stake. Perhaps Ebry's master-mind could save it. If Ebry was not discredited, all might yet be well. So he said: "O Mytto! This is beyond my powers. The white man's spell belongs to a section to which my learning has not yet advanced. But Ebry knows all these matters. Let us send, therefore, for him. He who has so many marvels at his command will not be foiled by a trifle such as this."

So a running messenger was despatched, who presently returned with the chief sorcerer in his company.

Ebry heard the tale, and pronounced unhesitatingly that the tube was occupied by a water sprite, who was maliguantly blocking the way.

The crowd spoke its angry feelings against the spiteful water sprite, and asked their chief sorcerer to remove it.

He, wary man, had expected such a request, and was ready for it. He said, "The wicked imp is not of my creation. It is a white spirit, over which I have no jurisdiction. Even though I ravelled the tube to pieces, inch by inch, I should not find it. When it saw the pipe-line being destroyed, then it would know its mission was fulfilled, and would depart below to the place whence it came. For it is the familiar of the white men, set in the pipe by them as an



A running messenger returned with the Chief Sorcerer in his company.

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invisible obstruction, because they are jealous lest the Ermans should learn all their mystic knowledge, and so become as clever as they."

There was a buzz of approval through part of the crowd at this ingenious explanation, but a small section received it silently. Mytto was their spokesman. "The white men," he said, "have voluntarily taught us all their arts. They have shown us how to make pots, how to make an engine they call a 'plough,' which will till the ground far better than our hoe, and a hundred other things. Of their own free will they described to me the working of this water-pipe. Maybe our chief sorcerer, in his infinite wisdom, is right. But before we make a final decision, let us ask the white men themselves."

"Here comes he of the sun-like hair," exclaimed a woman on the outside of the crowd, who had a special admiration for O'Neill's fiery locks.

"Well, bhoys," said the Irishman, coming up, "an' what's in the wind? Is it a wake ye're holdin'? Av it is, it's meself will be proud to jine yez."

No one quite understood this address, but its drift was caught, and a dozen fingers pointed to the bamboo tubes, and a dozen voices shouted out for explanations.

O'Neill held up his hand. "Wan at a time," he said, "av' yez plaze. Here, Mytto, decent man, as this is your holdin' we're on, do you tell me what all the bobbery's about."

Mytto explained in as few words as possible. The Irishman grinned. "Mytto," he said, "'tis but an ignorant haythen y'are afther all. Have yez never grasped the fact that wather won't run up the side of a house, unless you've a squirt to help it? Why, man dear, yer tube's all ridge and furrow, and half of it falls the wrong way. There, I don't believe yez see what I mane now. Ach, but yez are an ignorant lot. Here, give me your mattock, or whatever you call it, an' I'll fix yer watherworks meself."

The good-natured Irishman took a native hoe and set to work. He wielded the clumsy instrument with vigorous arm, scattering stones, clods, earth in liberal profusion, and making the fall a regular and continuous one from the stream to Mytto's door. In an hour and a half he had done this, had thrown a slight dam across the rivulet, so as to improve the bend of water, and had butted all doubtful joints with clay; and then he came and turned the tap.

The crowd had been waiting meanwhile, chattering and expectant. Most of them had their minds evenly balanced between Ebry and the white men. Upon the result of O'Neill's tap-turning would depend their verdict.

The Irishman, with the instinctive wit of his nation, was more or less aware of this, but, confident that the pipe-line was now properly laid, he nipped the bamboo plug with finger and thumb, and gave it a sharp turn.

Water gushed out in a solid stream, turbid and muddy at first, but soon clearing down to a transparent crystal.

Scoffing, sneering faces turned round towards Ebry from all parts. But the chief sorcerer exhibited no outward discomposure. "The white man has exorcised his own devil," he said.

"The white man," retorted O'Neill, who had overheard the words, "the white man has used a little commonsense, which some other people don't appear to possess. He saw that half the pipes slanted uphill, and so just set himself to work to rectify the same, that's all. There's yer watherworks in full swing, Mytto, me bhoy, an' never a penny o' rate to pay for the workin' of it. I'll just take a dhrink to wish yez luck, an' av yez can dish it wid a little palm-wine, it's meself that'll be obliged to yez. Thanks—when! Here's more power to yer elbow, an' speedy release from the humbuggin's o' them misdirected sorcerer fellows."

Shortly after this discomfiture of the sorcerers, a message came from King Oleron that he was anxious for the three Europeans to pay him a visit. They did go to see his majesty occasionally, being treated at these times with great deference, as though they were visitors from a higher sphere. But as the Ledge was situated on the outskirts of a village some five miles distant by the coast-line from the royal headquarters, and as the King always received them with all the pomp and circumstance he could muster, they never attended court without a special invitation. They felt that if King Oleron had wanted them he would have fixed their residence near his own; and as he had not done this, but had left them in the village presided over by Maantee and Mytto, his son, they concluded that his majesty had reasons for his action, and respected them without endeavouring to find out what they were.

On this special occasion they patched up their already much-patched clothes with scraps of *tappa*, and, making themselves as tidy as their slender means permitted of, set out to the royal hamlet.

King Oleron had, it seems, commanded their audience more for the pleasures of conversation than for business matters. The old man had a keen eye for the welfare of his subjects. He had encouraged, nay, ordered, the imitation of all those articles of European use that the white men had manufactured for themselves. But he had intended this meeting as an intellectual treat for himself. He wanted to hear more about the histories of men and tribes in that great island whence a new sun rose every morning.

The sun was to King Oleron the greatest and most wonderful object in his universe. He venerated it almost to idolatry. And so he thought that the people who lived round the sun's birthplace ought to be exceptionally favoured.

It is a dangerous thing to be the first to point out the world's rotundity. Galileo found that out; and the Pope and his cardinals at Rome were better prepared—at any rate by education—to receive the news than was this potentate of Erma. So the white men, knowing that they would only be discredited if they broached such a theme, wisely held their tongues, and so tacitly admitted that the sun popped out of the ground before their front doors every morning, thereby doing nobody any harm, and leaving the Kings mind unshaken in its pretty innocent belief.

But they did gently draw away the rose-coloured spectacles of fable, which showed King Oleron Europe as an elysium where the millennium was already in full sway. They told him how the sword was always unsheathed in some corner or other; how the scabbard was often thrown away; and how wars were often as bitter as that old one between Erma and Daji. They assured him that food was not to be had for the asking. There were no banana trees, bread-fruit trees, orange trees, from which any one who hungered or thirsted might reach up his hand and be satisfied.

In fact, they showed him that on the whole he had little cause to be dissatisfied with his own lot, or with that of his people. The little state of Erma was not perfect—no state ever will be this side heaven—but from what they had seen there were, they assured him, few places which offered the chance of so idyllic an existence.

King Oleron was pleased at this great compliment his guests had seen fit to pay him, and said so with courtly phrase. He had somewhat naturally feared that they would be dissatisfied with their surroundings. It gave him great joy to know that they were happy and contented with their lot.

"Erma will be your home now, for always; for many long, peaceful years, I trust, after my old bones have been laid beside my father's. You have no wish to leave us. You will marry and settle down. Look around you. There are in the villages many maidens, comely and amply dowered; you have but to make your choice. Any one of them would be overjoyed to cast in her lot with one of you, and become a faithful, loving wife; and parents would be only too glad to surrender a daughter to such a husband."

"Begob!" exclaimed O'Neill, "a bhoy might do worse,

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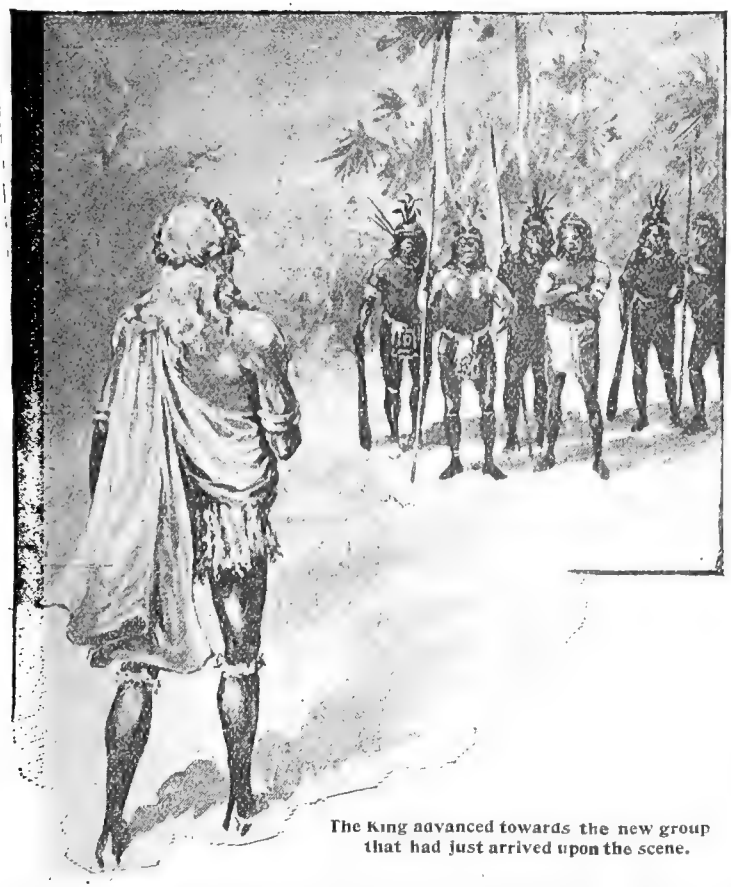

The King advanced towards the new group that had just arrived upon the scene.

yer honour. It's mighty sorry we was for ourselves when first we landed. But, bating that blear-eyed son of a snake, Ebry, who wanted to ate us at first, an' 'ud like to still, I daresay, for that matter, there isn't a soul in the place we don't get on wid. All the men have a pleasant 'morrow to yez,' an' all the maids an' matrons a smile when we meet. We've plenty to ate, an' lie soft o' nights. As to marryin' one o' them olive-skinned beauties, well, I had thought of it before; but, now yer honour puts the idea afresh into me skull, 'tisn't a bit unplasin'. There's Mytto's second sister —Norah, I call her; the name's a bit like that, and she favours another Norah I once knew in County Fermanagh —Norah might say, 'Yes, Murtagh, dear,' av I axed her; an' she'll bring nigh on a score yards o' good dyed *tappa* to the man she weds. So, yer honour, av it's convenient to all parties, I'll go to church wid Norah any day."

The Irishman's matrimonial aspirations had been known to his two comrades for some time. The girl had been in love with him ever since he was brought ashore; that was evident to everyone. And he was extremely fond of her. She was a bit of a beauty in her way—regular features, with large brown eyes and heavy lashes, and a complexion not darker than many a belle of Seville or Granada; limbed like a statue, and adorned with such a wealth of thick, wavy black hair, that, when loosened, it fell below her knees. And, if birth counts as anything in such a community, she was daughter to a village chief, whose authority was second only to King Oleron's. O'Neill had drawn down upon himself a large supply of chaff on account of this attachment; but he took it good-naturedly enough, and pursued his attentions all the same.

King Oleron nodded approvingly at what the Irishman said, and then asked if neither of his companions had wishes in the same direction.

Sneyd laughed and said he admired a good many of his majesty's spinster subjects, but as yet he had no very special preference for one above another. And Sandy Carmichael blushed through his brown skin, and said that he also had not thought of marrying—just yet.

At which his majesty was pleased to make a facetious reply, and a stream of lively talk ensued that was light, frivolous, and enjoyable in the extreme.

King Oleron had arranged a dance for his guests' enjoyment, and presently they moved off to the glade where the feast had been held on their first introduction to the Erman court. Here, in the midst of a crowd of expectant natives, the dancers, some five-and-twenty young girls, were standing in a picturesque group. The arrival of the King was the signal to commence. Accompanied only by the sweet sounds of their own voices, they started a slow, rhythmical measure that was very different to anything either of the Europeans had ever seen before. The three of them looked on entranced. Every gesture of the supple-jointed dancers was studied, yet modest and graceful. The maidens passed and repassed before them, their nimble feet moving noiselessly over the short, soft turf, and their lithe comely forms and arms swaying in perfect unison to the music. It was a lovely sight. Each girl's head was decked with a chaplet of beautiful flowers. Each wore necklaces and bangles of brilliant shells. Each swept her *tappa* robes with grace unsurpassable.

Admiration was plainly stamped on the face of each of our trio. Even Sandy's grim young countenance relaxed into a look of decided approval. They knew the Ermans were fond of the dance, but they were unprepared for such a wonderful display as this.

"Beauty of form and beauty of movement speak in a universal tongue," remarked the King sententiously.

"Begob, his honour's right!" exclaimed O'Neill, "An' it's meself that doesn't wonder at a Turk takin' a dozen wives, av he's trated to sights half as foine as this."

"You polygamous rascal," said Sneyd, with a grin; "and is this the way you show your constancy to the lovely Norah?"

"Arrah, get out wid yez," responded the Irishman. "I said a Turk might be carried away by his feelin's. An' is it a dacent Fermanagh bhoy yez would compare to a haythen Mussulman, that ates no pork an' dhrinks no whiskey? It's meself that'll stick to me Norah like tar to a pair o' new canvas breeches. But there's no harm in looking at another pretty girl betwixt an' between whiles is there?"

"Not being an engaged man myself, I couldn't say," replied Sneyd. "You'd better ask Norah for her opinion. She'll give it you freely enough."

"Faith," said O'Neill, with a merry twinkle in his eyes, "I've no doubt about the same. But, sakes alive, what's the matter?"

The dance had stopped on the instant. The dancers had fled like so many scared deer, and were seeking shelter behind their friends and relatives. The pleased looks had vanished from the islanders' faces. Every countenance showed fear, anger, hatred, or all three combined. The change had taken place as if by magic, and the three Europeans, unable to account for it, looked at one another in hopeless bewilderment. They turned round to ask the King what was the cause of this sudden commotion, but

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found that his majesty had risen to his feet, and was moving away from them. He was advancing towards a new group that had just arrived upon the scene. There was Ebry and his two assistants, and with them four strangers, truculent-looking ruffians, with feathers in their hair, the white stain of sea-salt upon their naked bodies, and club and lances in their hands.

The word "Daji" was murmured by voices behind them, and the Europeans knew what was the strangers' errand.

King Oleron came back to them, his face sad, but under command. In the old war, the Ermans had been forced to purchase peace by promising a yearly tribute of boys and maidens to their cannibal conquerors.

"I must ask you to go back to your dwelling. This is our black day which comes to us yearly. Fate, who walks amongst all men blindfold, has made it arrive on a festival. No," he continued, seeing that Sneyd and O'Neill were going to speak, and judging from their gestures the tenour of their remarks, "No, we cannot avoid the tribute. We are powerless. It must be paid. Go quietly, or they may make still further demands."

The King took his leave.

"The last is a hint that these new-comers may want to take us back with them," said Sandy. "Ebry was suggesting it, I'm certain. I saw him point this way, drawing their attention to us."

"Then," said Sneyd, "as we can't do any good, and as our own skins are in danger, we'd better be off. But it is a dark look out for somebody."

"It will be a dark look-out for one of those blayguards if I man-handle him," remarked O'Neill, turning back, with clenched fists and furrowed brow.

"We might knock them on the head," replied Sneyd, "and do it easily. But where's the good? We'd have the whole island of Daji down about our ears within the week, and what would happen then? The old scenes of horror would be acted over afresh."

"I've me doubts about that," said the Irishman. "But still we may as well foot it back to the Ledge now. Maybe the night, an' a pipe or two o' 'bacca, will rub up our brains a bit; an' who knows but what by to-morrow we mayn't have got some plan for circumventing the man-ating divils?"

So back the three of them trudged to the Ledge, very sick and sorrowful in heart at the thoughts of the awful trouble that had overtaken their kindly friends and neighbours.

(To be continued.)

Its Value.—"Is your picture in the Academy a success?"

"That's what I am wondering. Someone said it was worth the price of admission."

"Somebody has just invented a noiseless cannon."

"That's just the way with science—always giving help where it isn't needed. Why don't some of those cranks invent a noiseless alarm clock?"

A lady desiring to make the most of her choice tap of table beer, the merits of which her servants had discovered, for it disappeared rapidly, thus addressed her butler:

"Daly, what do you think would be the best thing to do in order to save this beer as much as possible?"

"Well, ma'am," replied the butler, "I don't think you could do better than to place a barrel of good strong ale close by the side of it."

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A LIFE'S WORK.

How Can It Be More Pleasantly and Profitably Passed?

This is the title of a new series of capital articles starting in *PEARSON'S WEEKLY* published on January 28th.

The idea is to assist parents to select a career for their children, and each week an article will appear dealing with one subject. This week treats of a clerkship in the Civil Service.

These articles are of intense interest, not only to parents who are anxious to know what to do with their children, but to those who even at the present time occupy situations and are anxious to improve their positions.

P.W. is published every Saturday and costs a penny.

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The Battle of Tooting.

THERE is a general impression that the real estate business in London and its suburbs is painfully dull. In fact, it is said that there are houses almost without number for which no tenants can be procured, even though our leading novelists and poets are employed to write the advertisements, setting forth the beauties and conveniences of which the fortunate tenant will become possessed.

To own but one house which brings in no return for its costs, but upon which taxes must be paid, and repairs be made, is a severe strain upon the finances of any man; but the man who owns three or four houses is thereby reduced to abject beggary. Such are the remarks which are daily made concerning the real estate business, and yet it was the impression one day last June, among the inhabitants of Middle Tooting, that a sudden and spirited revival in the real estate had taken place.

About a month ago a real estate agent, whose name is suppressed in order to give him time to reach the sheltering shores of Spain, undertook to obtain a tenant for a house situated in Middle Tooting. To his surprise he was one day called upon by a man who actually wanted the house, and was willing to pay as much rent as would be equivalent to nearly two-thirds of the taxes of the place. The happy agent promptly landed his prey by making him sign the lease, and told him that the house would be ready for him on the 24th of June.

Five days later another man appeared, and expressed a strong desire to rent the house in Middle Tooting for a term of three years, and to make his own repairs. Probably the agent had no intention at the time of indulging in illegal practices, but it was such a novelty to have two persons applying for the same house that he refrained from mentioning to the second man that the place was let, and permitted him to think that it was still in the market.

When the new applicant asked what the rent would be the agent named a price much larger than the price he had previously asked, and remarked that a year's rent must be paid in advance. Doubtless the agent thought that this unusual demand would render it unnecessary for him to undeceive the customer, but the latter unhesitatingly agreed to all the agent's terms, and promising to call the next day and sign the lease, went his way.

Before he fell asleep that night the agent had decided that he would let the house for the second time, pocket the year's rent, and visit Madrid and Grenada, places which he had long desired to see.

It was a wicked resolution, but the agent was a wicked man, and it must be remembered that there are few house agents whose brains would not reel at finding two successive tenants in two days, one of whom was willing to pay a years's rent in advance.

When the second applicant appeared the next day at the agent's office he found a lease waiting for him, bearing a signature which he supposed was that of the owner of the desired house. He paid his advance rent, pocketed the lease, and promised to move into the house on the 24th of June. After he had left the office the agent closed his shutters, locked his door, and disappeared, and by this time is probably on his way to a refuge where no extradition treaty can reach him.

It was about noon on the 25th of June (the 24th having fallen on a Sunday) that two large vans loaded with furniture, and escorted by two cabs, each containing a separate family, drew up at the door of the Middle Tooting house. The two families were those of the two tenants, and the two vans contained the first instalments of their respective household goods.

Mr. Smith, the earliest tenant, was an irascible man, and he lost no time in demanding to know what Mr. Brown, the other tenant, wanted. Mr. Brown sarcastically replied that what he wanted was his house, and what he did not want was any "cheek" on the part of Mr. Smith.

In a short time the conversation between the two became lively. Each shook his lease in the face of the other, and denounced him as a combined swindler and burglar. Meanwhile the cartmen wished to know what they were to do with the furniture, and the inhabitants of Middle Tooting, delighted to find that a free entertainment was in progress, turned out in great force, and filled the street for some distance above and below the contested house.

Foreseeing that argument would neither mend or end the matter, Mr. Smith finally ordered his cartmen to carry his furniture into the house. Mr. Brown instantly issued a similar order as to his furniture, and both enlisted strong contingents of the Middle Tootingers to assist in the operation.

Each tenant felt the importance of occupying the house in advance of his rival and the two heavy vans were unloaded with unprecedented speed. Mr. Smith's gang stormed the front drawing-room with the piano, upsetting the Brown piano on the front steps. The Brown party threw a cloud of skirmishers, armed with chairs, bedsteads, and crockery, into the bedrooms on the first floor, locking the door of each room as fast as it was filled.

Their rivals, however reached the third storey by way of the back windows, and with the help of storming ladders in advance of the Brown forces, and also occupied the cellar with a heavy column of books and rolls of carpeting. The dining-room was the scene of a severe contest, but Mr. Smith hurled iron pots through the windows, and, having thus demoralised the enemy, charged at the head of his forces with pokers and coal-scuttles, sweeping the foe before him in triumph.

The doors of the dining-room were then strongly barricaded with stoves and mattresses, and garrisoned with six dozen bottles of stout. Of course these successes were not gained without heavy losses, and there was scarcely any article of furniture which was not wounded. One of Mr. Brown's cartmen had three ribs broken at the moment of the defeat of the Brown piano, and two Middle Tootingers of the party of Mr. Smith emerged from the dining-room battle with their clothing in rags, and their eyes in the deepest mourning.

When hostilities were suspended, owing to the exhaustion of the stock of furniture, the position of the rival tenants was as follows. Mr. Smith occupied the cellar, the front and back drawing-rooms, the dining-

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room, and the third storey. Mr. Brown occupied the whole of the second storey, and held, with the remains of his piano, the front yard. There is no doubt that, on the whole, the advantage lay with Mr. Smith, but Mr. Brown and his entire family slept on the field of battle, or, to be precise, in the second-storey bedrooms, while Mr. Smith, owing to the loss of his entire stock of toilet crockery, retreated to a neighbouring hotel for the night.

It was the intention of both combatants to send for fresh supplies of furniture early the next morning, and to resume the battle until one or the other should be completely defeated, and ready to surrender at discretion. Mr. Smith was, moreover, resolved to lay in a supply of cases of paraffin oil, with a view of accidentally breaking them on all the more valuable pieces of Mr. Brown's furniture.

The next day, when he arose from his sleep, he was in a less combative and more reasonable frame of mind and decided to hire a lawyer, and leave with the latter the responsibility of conducting future hostilities. The same idea occurred almost simultaneously to Mr. Brown, and accordingly the Middle Tootingers who assembled to witness the resumption of the battle were disappointed to find that lawyers' clerks, bristling with writs of injunction and writs of dispossession, were encamped on the front steps of the house, waiting to serve their papers on Messrs. Smith and Brown.

When the various and intricate law suits which have already begun between Mr. Smith and Mr. Brown will be ended it is impossible to say. In the meantime each party is forbidden to occupy the house or to place any more furniture in it.

The people of Middle Tooting are firmly convinced that there has been a great revival in the real estate business, and householders are forming an association for the purpose of offering the absconding real estate agent a large reward if he will return and undertake to let their houses for them. The memory of the last 25th of June will long remain in Middle Tooting, and the inhabitants, while they are divided into a Brown party and a Smith party, will never cease to be united in admiration of the skill and business capacity of the vanished house agent.

Wm. Lang.

THE CAVALRY OFFICER AND HIS UNKNOWN LOVER.

The period of Napoleon's career when at its zenith is full of romantic adventures as connected with the history of the officers' lives that served under the great captain. He was quick to observe merit, and prompt to reward it, and this it was that made his followers so devoted to him, and so anxious to distinguish themselves by prowess in battle, and strict soldierly conduct in the Emperor's service.

Colonel Eugene Merville was an attaché of Napoleon's staff. He was a soldier in the true sense of the word—devoted to his profession, and brave as a lion.

Though very handsome and of a fine bearing, he was of humble birth—a mere child of the camp, and had followed the drum and bugle from boyhood.

Every step in the line of promotion had been won by the stroke of his sabre, and his last promotion from major of cavalry was for a gallant deed which transpired on the battlefield beneath the Emperor's own eye.

Murat, that prince of cavalry officers, loved him like a brother, and taught him all that his own good taste and natural instinct had not led him to acquire before.

It was the carnival season in Paris, and young Merville found himself at the masked ball in the French Opera House. Better adapted in his taste to the field than the boudoir, he flirts but little with the gay figures that cover the floor, and joins but seldom in the giddy waltz.

But at last, while standing thoughtfully and regarding the assembled throng with a vacant eye, his attention was suddenly aroused by the appearance of a person in a white satin domino, the universal elegance of whose figure, manner, and bearing convinced all that her face and mind must be equal to her person in grace and loveliness.

Though in so mixed an assembly, still there was a dignity and reserve in the manner of the white domino that rather repulsed the idea of a familiar address, and it was some time before the young soldier found courage to speak to her.

Some alarm being given, there was a violent rush of the throng towards the door, where unless assisted, the lady would have materially suffered. Eugene Merville offers his arm, and with his broad shoulders and stout frame wards off the danger. It was a delightful moment; the lady spoke the purest French, was witty, fanciful, and captivating.

"Ah! lady, pray raise that mask and reveal to me the charms of feature that must accompany so sweet a voice and so graceful a form as you possess."

"You would perhaps be disappointed."

"No, I am sure not."

"Are you so very confident?"

"Yes. I feel that you are beautiful. It cannot be otherwise."

"Don't be too sure of that," said the domino. "Have you never heard of the Irish poet Moore's story of the veiled prophet of Khora san—how, when he disclosed his countenance, its hideous aspect killed his beloved one? How do you know that I shall not turn out a veiled prophet of Khorassan?"

"Ah, lady! your every word convinces me to the contrary," replied the enraptured soldier, whose heart began to feel as it had never felt before; he was already in love.

She eludes his efforts at discovery, but permits him to hand her to her carriage, which drives off in the darkness, and though he throws himself upon his fleetest horse he is unable to overtake her.

* * * * *

The young French colonel becomes moody; he has lost his heart, and knows not what to do. He wanders hither and thither, shuns his former places of amusement, avoids his military companions, and, in short, is as miserable as a lover can well be, thus disappointed.

One night, just after he had left his hotel, on foot, a figure muffled to the very ears stopped him.

"Well, monsieur, what would you with me?" asked the soldier.

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"You would know the name of the white domino?" was the reply.

"I would indeed!" replied the officer, hastily. "How can it be done?"

"Follow me."

"To the end of the earth if it will bring me to her."

"But you must be blindfolded."

"Very well."

"Step into this vehicle."

"I am at your command."

And away rattled the young soldier and his strange companion.

"This may be a trick," reasoned Eugene Merville; "but I have no fear of personal violence. I am armed with this trusty sabre, and can take care of myself."

He soon found the vehicle stopped, and he was led blindfolded into a house.

When the bandage was removed from his eyes he found himself in a richly-furnished boudoir, and before him stood the domino just as he had met her at the masked ball. To fall upon his knees and tell her how much he had thought of her since their separation, that his thoughts had never left her, that he loved her devotedly, was as natural as to breathe—and he did so most gallantly and sincerely.

"Shall I believe all you say?"

"Lady, let me prove it by any test you may put upon me."

"Know, then, that the feelings you avow are mutual. Nay, I have something more to say."

"Talk on for ever, lady! Your voice is music to my heart and ears."

"Would you marry me, knowing no more of me than you do now?"

"Yes, if you were to go to the very altar masked!" he replied.

"Then I will test you."

"How, lady?"

"For one year be faithful to the love you have professed and I will be yours—as truly as Heaven shall spare my life."

"Oh, cruel, cruel suspense!"

"You demur?"

"Nay, lady, I shall fulfil your injunctions as I promised."

"If at the expiration of a year you do not hear from me then the contract shall be null and void. Take this half ring," she continued, "and when I supply the broken portion I will be yours."

He kissed the little emblem, swore again and again to be faithful, and pressing her hand to his lips, bade her adieu. He was conducted away again as mysteriously as he had been brought thither, nor could he by any possible means discover where he had been, his companion rejecting all bribes, and even refusing to answer the simplest question.

* * * * *

Months roll on. Colonel Merville is true to his vow, and happy in the anticipation of love.

Suddenly he was ordered on an Embassy to Vienna, that gayest of all European capitals, about the time that Napoleon is planning to marry the Archduchess Maria Louisa.

The young colonel is handsome, manly, and already distinguished in arms, and becomes at once a great favourite at Court, every effort being made by the women to captivate him, but in vain; he is constant and true to his vow.

But his heart was not made of stone; the very fact that he had entertained such tender feeling for the white domino had doubtless made him more susceptible than before.

At last he met the young Baroness Caroline Waldorff, and in spite of his vows he loves her; he secretly reviles the engagement he had so blindly made at Paris.

She seems to wonder at what she believes to be his devotion, and yet the distance that he maintains. The truth was that his sense of honour was so great that, though he felt he really loved the young baroness, and even that she returned his affection, still he had given his word, and it was sacred.

The satin domino is no longer the ideal of his heart, but assumes the most repulsive form in his imagination, and becomes, in place of his good angel, his evil genius.

Well, time rolls on; he is to return in a few days; it is once more the carnival season, and in Vienna, too, that gay city.

He joins in the festivities of the masked ball, and what wonder fills his brain when about the middle of the evening the white domino steals before him in the same white satin dress he had seen her wear a year before at the French Opera House in Paris.

Was it a fancy?

"I come, Colonel Eugene Merville, to hold you to your promise," she said, laying a hand lightly upon his arm.

"Is this a reality or a dream?" asked the amazed soldier.

"Come, follow me, and you shall see that it is reality," continued the mask pleasantly.

"I will."

"Have you been faithful to your promise?" asked the domino, as they retired into a neighbouring saloon.

"Most truly in act, but alas! I fear, not in heart!"

"Indeed!"

"It is too true, lady, that I have seen and loved another, though my vow to you has kept me from saying so to her."

"And who is this that you thus love?"

"I will be frank with you, and you will keep my secret?"

"Most religiously."

"It is the Baroness von Waldorf," he said, with a sigh.

"And you really love her?"

"Alas, only too dearly," said the soldier sadly.

"Nevertheless, I must hold you to your promise. Here is the other half of the ring; can you produce its mate?"

"Here it is," said Eugene Merville.

"Then I, too, keep my promise!" said the domino, raising her mask, and showing to his astonished view the face of the Baroness von Waldorff!

"Ah, it was the sympathy of true love that attracted me after all," exclaimed the young soldier.

She had seen and loved him for his manly spirit and character, and having found by inquiry that he was worthy of her love, she had managed this delicate intrigue, and had tested him, and now gave to him her wealth, title, and everything!

They were married with great pomp, and accompanied the Archduchess to Paris.

Napoleon, to crown the happiness of his favourite, made Colonel Eugene Merville at once General of Division.

Ewart Irwin.

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The - Final - War.

BY LOUIS TRACY.

CHAPTER LII. *(continued).*

Paris Taken.

These things became known in the Chamber of Deputies, which, with the Senate, was in perpetual session, and Ministers quailed before the furious interpolations hurled at them from all quarters, without order or decorum, or semblance of debate.

At last M. Bourgeois managed to gain a hearing. He had the courage of his convictions, and uttered that which was in all men's hearts, but which none had hitherto dared to speak.

"M. le Président," he cried in ringing tones, "France has been led into abysmal depths of folly by the incapacity and wilful arrogance of her self-styled rulers. This is a war of individuls, not of nations. These soldiers thundering at our gates are the avengers of a crime; our citizens, who are being shot down in the streets by their own brothers, are the sad victims of a ministerial blunder. Shall no one save France? Is my life to be taken as a traitor because I proclaim these awful truths? Be it so, I will die cheerfully if thereby my voice shall prevail in the cause of my oppressed and distracted country!"

A fierce outburst of denunciation drowned his speech, but he stood coldly impassive through it all, and it was a highly significant fact that when a member of the Extreme Left rose and moved the adjournment of the Chamber until 9 p.m.—it being then six o'clock—there was hardly a dissentient.

The representatives of the people wished to take counsel with each other before they committed themselves in open debate.

When the House re-assembled, it was noted that neither M. Bourgeois nor M. Hanotaux were present, which was odd, for between such antagonists *rapprochement* was surely impossible? It was even rumoured that they had met to fight a duel forthwith, but reasonable men scouted the suggestion.

Meanwhile some comfort was taken from the sensible appeal made by a subordinate Minister. He asked members to give their support to the Government, at least, until the morrow. The Chamber would not adjourn throughout the night, and half hourly bulletins of a thoroughly authentic nature would be issued.

All knew what this statement signified. An attack was expected that night. If it was successfully repelled the Government would still strive to grapple with the situation. If not—ah, who could say what would happen?

General Saussier was more energetic than ever.

He felt sure that the Porte de Versailles would be the ultimate objective of the British advance, and he placed the district between the Fort d'Issy and Vanvres in such a complete state of defence that even under the demoniac conditions of the previous night's fighting, anything like a sustained assault would be out of the question. Still uninformed as to the exact nature of the weapon used by the English—which, as Lord Roberts surmised, was discussed with bated breath by every human being in Paris—he realised its properties sufficiently to endeavour to minimise it by preparing huge bonfires at every available point, and these were to be lighted at the first sign of an attack in force.

When, therefore, two divisions of the British Army came in touch with the French outposts a little before midnight some very desperate and determined fighting took place without any definite result being achieved.

The Chamber of Deputies were cheered by the report that their soldiers were holding the position with splendid effect, and Lord Roberts was almost unmanned by the knowledge that his brave troops were suffering so grievously with no apparent hope of success.

Their mission was to spend themselves and be spent in the hopeless task of striving to carry an impregnable position, but they were in reality contributing as fully towards the ultimate victory as were the gallant comrades whose happier lot it was to first surmount the inner line of the fortifications.

For Alleyne's and Massy's Special Service Corps were now marching swiftly towards the real point of the attack, through the suburb of Montrouge, with its triple roads to Paris by the Portes de Chatillon, d'Orléans, and de Montrouge.

News of their progress reached General Saussier at his station in the Rue de Vaugirard shortly before one o'clock.

Three small forts *en route* had been captured with the same exasperating ease that had accompanied the attack on their mighty neighbours twenty-four hours earlier.

Quick to scent the new danger, the French Commander-in-Chief galloped along the Boulevard Lefévre and Boulevard Brune, followed by his staff. Collecting all the available troops in the locality, and ordering two divisions which were bivouacked in the Parc Montsouris to come up at the double, he flung open the three gates and poured thousands of men into the congeries of houses and gardens that make up this well-known suburb.

In so doing he unwittingly created the very conditions desired by his adversaries.

The astounding effects of the electric rifle, to call it by its common but inaccurate title, were soon demonstrated when a hand to hand struggle commenced.

At Vanvres and Issy, where the combatants were equal in arms and valour, the loss was heavy on both sides; and, if anything, the French had the better of the fray owing to the strength of their position.

But in Montrouge the odds were entirely in favour of the British. Strive to picture what it means in a battle when every shot fired on one side cannot fail to maim or kill an opponent. There was no opportunity for faulty marksmanship. The Englishmen were now so wholly imbued with belief in their invincible weapon that they were as cool and methodical in action as though they were going through the manual and firing exercise on a barrack square. There was no hurry or confusion, or indiscriminate firing. The more nervous their foes the more rapidly they fell. Line after line of determined assailants withered before the all-devouring rays of piercing light. Men were mortally struck, they knew not how or whence. They strove madly to burst through the deadly zone of death that environed them, but a planet might as well seek to depart from its predestined path through space.

Hours afterwards, the majority of the attacking force found that their hands were badly blistered with the heat of the rifle barrels, but of this they knew nothing during the stress of the fight.

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General Saussier, impetuously urging on his men to stem the steady progress of the British, was unconsciously giving effect to the views expressed by Lord Roberts in the case room of the Fort de Buc. He was now convinced that the sustained conflict at Vanvres was but a feint, and that the real attack was being delivered here.

But he also realised that the end had come, so he spurred onward his powerful charger, whilst he shrilly vociferated: "*En avant, mes enfants, en avant.*" Better to die in front of the walls of Paris than live to see his beloved city again occupied by the foe.

The momentary glare of a French volley revealed his gigantic frame to the eyes of an officer of the 42nd, who was directing the fire of his men.

"Shoot the horse!" he shouted in the ear of a brawny Scot, who was about to cover the general's colossal frame. The order came just in time. A second later the powerful animal which carried the Governor of Paris jumped into the air, with a bullet in his brain, and crashed to the earth with his unwieldy rider.

It was sufficient. When General Saussier regained his breath and his senses two hours later, he was able to sample some Scotch whisky, and take an intelligent interest in the mechanism of the new rifle, which was explained to him by an old acquaintance, Major Harington, ex-junior military attaché at the British Embassy.

—— and crashed to the earth with his unwieldy rider.

Within a few minutes after the fall of the French Commander-in-Chief, the Colonels of the 42nd Highlanders, the Royal Fusiliers, and the 18th Royal Irish, which regiments respectively led the three avenues of approach to the walls, perceived that the psychological moment for a resolute advance had arrived.

Unable to communicate with or see each other, they were individually led at the same time to form this conclusion by the obvious demoralisation of the troops to which they were opposed.

For, truth to tell, the incident of Rouen had repeated itself.

The best soldiers in the world are the most difficult to control when reason and discipline alike fail to hold men to their duty.

Stupefied, frantic, demoralised by the supernatural method of the British attack, the battalions which General Saussier had hurried into Montrouge were now rushing back into the city by the three gates through which they made their exit. When the guards made an effort to raise the drawbridges and barricade the double entrance to each gate, they were ruthlessly cut down by the infuriated masses of men who saw their only avenue of escape from death thus threatened.

Heedless now of the flying enemy, the three British regiments raced along the chaussées to find their progress practically unhindered, and each set up a wild yell of triumph as they found themselves within the walls.

Which of the three was the first to enter Paris is a question that cannot be determined here. It formed a fruitful subject for discussion at mess dinners for decades. In the canteens of Aldershot and the Curragh it led to many a darkened optic and damaged nose. The newspapers of the respective countries vehemently declared that national prejudice alone prevented the others from admitting the just claims of England, Scotland, or Ireland, as the case might be, to the distinguished honour of having first gained the interior of the city.

Even Lord Roberts shied at a definite decision.

"The leading regiments of General Massy's division," ran the words of his famous dispatch, "entered Paris simultaneously, *so far as can be learned*, about 1.25 a.m."

This nice point did not trouble the Chamber of Deputies when the news came by telephone, from the Station de Montrouge, that the Porte d'Orléans ("a tremendous argument in our favour," said the Fusiliers afterwards) had been forced, and that British troops (undoubtedly a mixed force of Highlanders and Irishmen) were even then advancing along the Avenue du Maine.

But a check was now experienced.

Lord Roberts had laid his plans entirely upon the presumption that the assault would be effective. What would happen were it otherwise, he never asked himself, for that way madness lay.

When Major Harington taxed the splendid powers of his hunter to the utmost in the delirious race back to the spot where he knew he should find the Commander-in-Chief, the latter was even then superintending the advance of the relief divisions.

He kept on pouring brigade after brigade into Paris, and sent Harington back as quickly as he had come to ascertain if the flanking movement towards the Porte de Versailles had been efficiently carried out, whilst other aides were dispatched with imperative orders to Generals Massy and Alleyne to entrench themselves in the streets between the Boulevard d'Italie and the Rue de Vanvres.

So implicitly did Lord Roberts trust his lieutenants, and so important did he deem the work of expediting the march of the reserves, that it was not until 3 a.m. that he personally entered the city by the Porte de Montrouge.

Stubborn and persistent street fighting had been in progress during the interval. As the first faint streaks of daylight rose over Paris the position was still critical and dubious. The whole of the fortifications from the Seine at Point du Jour to the Porte d'Orléans were in the possession of the British, but the men were almost exhausted by the heavy marching and the strain of the fight, whilst fresh troops were still swarming across the river from the north and north-east.

When his lordship reached the front at the Gare de Sceaux it was more than probable that the advancing day would witness another big battle, and the outlook was anything but promising. Indeed, were the issue left to the army, France was still defiant and even dangerous.

But other elements were at work, and in the ultimate clash of events they predominated.

At 2.30 a.m. the Government had resigned. A Ministry of Conciliation was hastily formed, and at 3.15 a.m. an officer bearing a flag of truce rode down the Boulevard Raspail bearing a letter from M. Bourgeois, countersigned by the President of the Republic, which he handed to Lord Roberts.

"For the sake of our people and of yours," read this brief message, "let there be peace."

"Is M. Bourgeois the Premier?" said his lordship.

"Within the hour," was the reply.

"Tell him, then, that I will meet him here within half-an-hour," said the British Commander-in-Chief, "and communicate to him the demands of England, if he be empowered to accept them."

In less than the allotted time, the President and M. Bourgeois both made their appearance.

It was no season for diplomatic fencing or laboured civility.

"My instructions are definite and explicit," said Lord Roberts,

"I can only ask you to spare France."

when the two notable Frenchmen were introduced to him. "I can offer no terms save those of unconditional surrender."

"I can only ask you to spare France," said the President. "She is not to blame. Punish her rulers if you will, for I am chief of them."

"Unconditional surrender means anything or nothing," exclaimed M. Bourgeois. "Who shall fix a limit to its significance."

"England and America," replied Lord Roberts.

"An honourable tribunal. I accept," cried the President.

"France accepts," said M. Bourgeois.

And whilst the fateful words still rang in the ears of the British General, there came through the open doorway of the room in which the meeting was held the fitful sounds of distant firing towards the Champs de Mars, where the intelligence of the armistice had not yet penetrated.

They were the last tokens of warfare between Christian races, the dying cries of the horrific demon which had waged so deadly and so prolonged a conflict with civilisation.

The war was ended.

CHAPTER LIII.

How England Received the News.

It was a clear calm morning, one of those serene morning of September which are the glory of the English climate. London looked cool and fresh, and there was a joyousness in the air as her citizens cracked their million eggs, took their innumerable 'buses, and rolled by devious routes from all points of the compass to the city. There was an omen in the placid beauty of the day, did they but know it. For the war was at last over, and peace—universal peace—reigned over the entire world. The last echoes of the cannon had died away, and no man raised his sword against his brother.

But shortly after nine o'clock extraordinary excitement convulsed every newspaper office in Fleet Street. News editors lost their calmness, foremen printers turned pale and trembled, and even the phlegmatic compositor affected agitation. For a telegram of supreme importance had just arrived, and the battle of armed men was changed now into a battle of journals. Who should be the first to announce the news to an unsuspecting world?

"England is saved!" exclaimed the too impressionable sub-editor of the Evening News as he read, in feverish excitement, the tantalising tape.

"Never you mind about England being saved," observed his superior firmly, throwing away the end of his eighteenth cigarette, "what *you've* got to do is to scoop the Sun!"

It was a hard, unsympathetic saying; but it was business. And everyone proceeded to scoop.

Who shall describe the contest in all its alternations of hope and despair, its fluctuations of failure and success? If the Sun was first at Piccadilly Circus, the News reached Tottenham Court Road three minutes before. It was the Echo's boast that the inhabitants of Shepherd's Bush would have remained unenlightened for hours save for itself, whilst the pallid Star gleamed proudly and solitary at Clapham Junction. But no one, other than a judge trained in Jubilee handicaps and Royal Hunt Cups, could determine which newspaper first rounded Cheapside or touched Charing Cross, or triumphant gained the Bank—although it was the boast of the News that it accomplished this last feat by half a neck.

Nor did it matter. The machines could not print fast enough to meet the demand. As first was heard the miraculous cry: "The fall of Paris," there came a shock of bewilderment which was followed by a wild rush for the papers. With shaking hands and beating hearts, the excited crowds seized them and tore them wildly open. It was true! There, beneath prodigious headings that sprawled half down the column, was the brief but all sufficing paragraph.

"Last night Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, under cover of a feint towards the Seine, made a strong attack upon the southern lines of the fortifications of Paris. The attempt was completely successful, and early this morning the city fell into the hands of the British troops. The President of the Republic has capitulated and there is now cessation of hostilities."

Perhaps—in Paris—but in triumphant London there was fierce fighting for the newspapers. No one gave heed to the price demanded. Shillings, half-crowns even sovereigns were tossed to the happy newsboys by exultant citizens who now learnt for the first time that England's power was supreme and her mighty empire safe beyond possibility of attack. As the news rushed along, the tension of public excitement became stronger and stronger. The wildest evidences of rejoicing were to be observed. Everything was forgotten, all business laid aside, no word spoken save on this marvellous and glorious news which breathed peace and prosperity once more upon a stricken and suffering people.

There was complete and absolute derangement of traffic and business. No one wanted to go anywhere. No one wanted to do anything. Where each one learned the news, there he stayed in eager discussion and warm felicitations with such strangers as he met. The approaches to the City were thronged with crowds reckless of time and place, feeling nothing but the pulsations of a common patriotism and the common joy of a national deliverance.

News is sometimes laggard in its flight, and with broken wing flits feebly to distant suburbs. But in grave affairs there is something mysterious in its incredible speed. London was not long in feeling to its uttermost parts the thrilling ecstasy of the glorious intelligence. That modern Perseus, the ubiquitous newsboy, borne along by train or cart, or rushing on bicycle, woke up Kensington from her dreams, pierced the slumbers of St. John's Wood, fluttered the placid bosom of Brixton, and, even in the indefinable solemnity of Finsbury and New Barnet, brought irregular and disturbing agitations. The tumultuous swirl of excitement in the City sent forth its ripples to the outermost regions, and in a moment the six millions of greater London were convulsed with the same delirium of joy.

Words are vain and ineffectual to paint certain moments of high-pitched emotion. Nor can they describe the strange, restless, inexplicable mood which drove from every suburb and every district the people of the capital into its main thoroughfares. It was as if to be away from the burning centre of national rejoicing were unbearable. There was a fierce desire to take an individual share in public demonstration.

For this unwonted thing had at last occurred. London so torn and divided, so scattered in its parts, so separated in its interests, so lacking in a common centre of public life—with every township regardless of its neighbour, each street indifferent to the next one—like some grotesque animal that has a hundred nerve centres, each self-sustaining and independent in a large measure upon the main seat of life—this inorganic city had at last become one, organic and homogeneous. All its private interests were fused by the fervent heat of patriotism into a common feeling. Distinctions and differences were lost. The single impulse was to gather together, to express in one vast note the cry of mutual exultation.

Thus there flowed into the centre of London great crowds anxious to catch the enthusiasm of others and to express their own. Every face was bright; it was more than a happy city, it was a happy nation.

Beyond all, the Mall—that noble boulevard that stretches through St. James's Park—was crowded with expectant throngs. Before Buckingham Palace a dense mass of people waited patiently with excited speech and much cheering,

each one eager but contented, awaiting some sign of royal recognition.

And such sign was not wanting. When the Ministers had met as hurriedly as might be, and with heartfelt thankfulness heard the news—oppressed in some cases by an emotion that was almost overpowering—the leading members of the Council of National Defence drove to the Palace to give official tidings to the Queen.

Hence it was that at twelve o'clock those who occupied the roadway and stretched far down the lovely avenue of the Mall, had the satisfaction of seeing Her Majesty appear upon the balcony with the Prince upon her right and Lord Wolseley upon her left, whilst around her were her Prime Minister, Mr. Gladstone, Lord Rosebery, and Mr. Balfour. Deafening cheers rent the air, renewed again and again, as with a bright smile Her Majesty bowed to her people. It was a fresh evidence of her graciousness that she did not forget the man to whom the splendid victory was mainly due, and as she gave her hand to the Commander-in-Chief, who kissed it respectfully, redoubled enthusiasm prevailed, until the incident, almost overburdened with the strain of excitement, was terminated by the withdrawal of the royal party. It was impossible to subdue the feelings of personal emotion by commonplace activity. Everyone roamed through the streets and discussed in public places or met in drawing-room and studio, full of the one topic.

And so the day sped. There was sadness, no doubt, in the purlieus of Soho, but it was not manifested with undue emphasis abroad. When a Frenchman made his appearance, the good-humoured Englishman treated him with a consideration that did him infinite credit.

Sometimes the temptation of a little badinage was too strong to be resisted. A distinguished French *savant* made his appearance in St. James's Restaurant, and was moodily drinking his claret when a couple of healthy, hearty Britons took up their places at his side.

M. Trochu—that was his name—sighed deeply, and, after a few diffident glances at his companions, asked in hesitating tones and in broken accents:

Sometimes the temptation for a little badinage was too strong to be resisted.

"It is, gentlemen, that you can tell me vot ze condizions are of truce in my belofed Paris?"

His voice trembled, and there was something pathetic in his earnestness which even touched the hearts of his listeners. But the devil of mischief sprang in, and one of them answered:

"We have only heard a few details, sir, and they do not amount to much; but it appears that the Bridge of Austerlitz is to be demolished and the Eiffel Tower torn down. But, of course, you can build others in their place."

"*Mon Dieu!*" he exclaimed. "What next?"

"The Venus de Milo and your Elgin Marble are, of course, to be removed to the British Museum, and it is proposed to take down and re-erect the Church of St. Germain L'Auxerrois in Brixton."

The Frenchman groaned and hid his face in his hands.

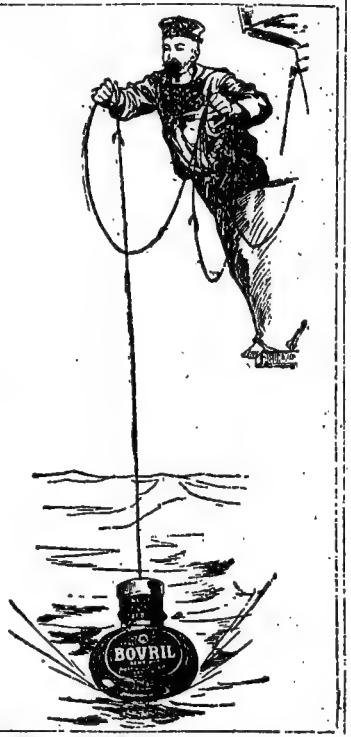
(*To be continued.*)

A Sound for Safety.

As the sailor, to avoid the dangers of shallow water, finds his safeguard in the sound, so the human constitution, threatened by the treacherous changes of the winter season, finds a safeguard in "Bovril."

BOVRIL

supplies the bodily heat necessary to throw off the colds and chills of winter, to ward off the lurking danger of influenza, and to fortify the system against the attacks of disease.



THE TIMMINS TROUBLES.

IX.—An Impromptu Excursion.

"Now, my dear," exclaimed Mr. Timmins, as he dashed into the room, "bustle about. It's now eight o'clock; the boat for Clacton starts at nine thirty, and I'm going. I'm not the man to go pleasuring alone. I want society, and there's no society, Mrs. Timmins, that I admire so much as yours."

Mrs. Timmins flushed up with pleasure. "That gives me an hour and twenty-five minutes to dress. I can do it in that time," she said.

"I don't see how you can make that out. The boat leaves from the Old Swan Pier, Mrs Timmins; it doesn't leave from our front door, there, and you haven't mor'n an hour to dress. I'll shave while you are getting ready, and we'll take dinner to-day within the sound of the surf, right within the sound of the surf, you know."

Mr. Timmins stropped his razor, and shaved himself carefully. Mrs. Timmins went from one cupboard to another, and threw everything out on the bed. In half an hour Mr. Timmins was prepared for the voyage, and admonished Mrs. Timmins to bestir herself.

"But I haven't commenced yet?" objected the lady.

"Haven't commenced! What have you been doing all this time? What have you been up to? Do you know it's half-past eight?"

"Well, my dear, you were at the glass shaving, and I didn't want to disturb you."

"Oh, you didn't! Of course not! You can't put on a frock without the glass, can you? You've got to have a looking-glass to button your boots. D'you suppose you can get ready in half an hour? Why weren't you ready when I came in?"

"Never mind, dear, I'll be in time. You go down in the parlour, and I'll be there in a minute."

Mr. Timmins growled his way downstairs. Mrs. Timmins hurried on her skirt, put on her hat, and then prepared to dress herself.

"Are you ready?" bowled Mr. Timmins, when he'd waited about three minutes.

"In a minute," piped Mrs. Timmins, feeling round the small of her back after an invisible string.

"Perhaps I'd better go over and tell the boat to come round for you in the morning. Maybe you're acquainted with the steamboat. P'raps you've got influence enough with that steamboat to make it wait a month or two for you," and Mr. Timmins went out on the steps and glared up and down the street.

Mrs. Timmins took off her hat, brushed her hair, and screwed herself round like a giraffe to find another string. Then she opened the top drawer, and pulled half a dozen pieces of lace out of a green box. Putting her fingers to her lip she began to consider which piece she had better wear.

"If you're coming with me, you've got to start!" bawled Mr. Timmins. "What do you take me for, a season ticket, that you can go on any time? Are you coming?"

"In a minute. I'll be there in a minute," gasped Mrs. Timmins, clutching the piece of lace she didn't want. "I'm only looking for my parasol."

Mr. Timmins thumped the balusters for about a minute.

"What's the matter with you now? What under the sun are you up to? Do you know I asked you to go to Clacton about six weeks ago? How many clothes are you putting on? How much toggery do you need? If I can find an engine powerful enough, I'm going to have you dressed by steam hereafter until the fuel gives out. Are you going to Clacton with me or not?"

"Yes, dear, I'm ready," and Mrs. Timmins rustled downstairs. "Won't you please pin the centre of my overskirt to the centre of my dress?"

Mr. Timmins went at it. Mrs. Timmins pulled her hat round straight and drew on her gloves, and then glanced down her back to see how her liege L. was getting on.

"Stand still, can't you? How d'you suppose I can tell the middle of anything while you're twisting round like a grindstone? Stand up straight. I don't know what—hang the thing!" and he ran the pin into his thumb.

"Oh, dear, I'm so sorry!" said Mrs. Timmins.

"Oh, yes! You're sorry! Why weren't you sorry before I began? What d'you come down here half dressed for? What d'you suppose I am, a broken-backed seamstress. That thumb won't be well for a year and a half. Hang the dress! Don't you know how to pin yourself up yet? You wait here, I'll be back soon; I'm just going for a pile-driver to fasten you together."

"Never mind, dear; it doesn't matter if it isn't pinned."

"Doesn't matter!" howled Mr. Timmins, "doesn't matter! What d'you ask me to pin it for, then? What d'you do it for, just to see me mutilate my thumb? Look here, are you going with me, or going to stand here like an eight-day clock? It's past nine, and you've seven more hours' dressing to do, haven't you?"

"I'm ready, my dear. I'm only waiting for you."

They took a cab, and as they got out, Mrs. Timmins rushed for the pier.

"What's the matter with you now? Can't you see there's plenty of time?" reasoned Mr. Timmins.

She accommodated her steps to his, and in due time they reached the pier with fifteen minutes to spare.

"Another time when I want to go anywhere, Mrs. Timmins, you just be ready the moment I speak. I won't be kept waiting all day for anybody. You hear me, do you?"

"Yes, dear," said Mrs. Timmins, beginning to realise that she had left her fan, smelling bottle, parasol, veil, and handkerchief at home in her hurry, and had forgotten to close the window in case of rain.

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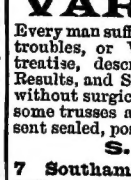

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Agents wanted where not represented.

I'VE FOUND IT AT LAST.

H. T., having heard that there are a large number of coal and iron mines in Spain, asks me to tell him the respective numbers.———There are 1,027 iron mines and 461 coal mines.

J. YOUNG thinks that boys are not so fond of the sea as they used to be. At one time, youngsters were always threatening to run away when they couldn't do as they liked at home, but one does not hear this so often now.———There may be some foundation for the statement, but the applications for admission to the Navy do not confirm your opinion that British boys are losing their love for the career of a sailor. There were 4,600 applications last year, although the height and chest measurement have been increased.

B. S.—You mean the baya bird of India. This bird has the curious habit of fastening fireflies to its nest with moist clay; at night such a nest looks like an electric street lamp.

F.—Foolscap paper was so named from the fact that the first that was made bore the mark of a jester in cap and bells. The mark has long since disappeared, but the name remains as the indication of a certain size of paper.

A. M.—The inhabitants of Sydney, New South Wales, seem to be pleasure-loving people. There are about 400,000 persons in Sydney, and to gratify their desire for amusement they have eight theatres and the same number of music halls. Outdoor sports are very popular, yachting being in high favour.

G. K.—Peach stones are readily sold in New York, where they are bought up by merchants, who obtain perfume, flavouring essence, and prussic acid from the kernels.

P. L.—The pulse of the average healthy human being varies greatly in different parts of the globe, according to the temperature, barometric pressure, the height of the individual and other conditions. The rate for the average man in this country is 72 beats a minute. The Teutonic races, being taller, have a slower pulse; the rate for the Andaman Islanders, probably the smallest people on the earth, is 40. A savant who climbed Mount Blanc found that his pulse at that elevation recorded 120, whereas the normal figure was 60. In the tropics the pulse has been known to rise to 140.

WHEAT.—Wheat from Chili and Argentina reaches us long before our own crop is ready, for the simple reason that in those countries it ripens in January. In Peru this cereal is ready for cutting in November.

G. N.—In no country in the world are infectious diseases so fatal as in Russia, and this is especially true in regard to children. Measles, scarlatina, diphtheria, and small-pox carry off large numbers of infants every year. Official figures show that more than a million and a half children and adults die every year from infectious diseases, and there is every reason to believe that most of these might be saved if proper precautions were taken.

R. O.—The "Oratory of Gallerus" is a remarkable structure at Dingle, in County Kerry, Ireland. Who Gallerus was, and the exact date of the erection of this edifice, history does not tell us; all we know is that it is a relic of the early days of Christianity in Ireland and that it has existed for more than 1,000 years.

D. M.—In the city of Mexico the natives act as beasts of burden; they carry tremendous weights on their backs for miles, and charge very moderately. Occasionally they drag a kind of cart with enormous wheels. In the surrounding country, mules are used; you can see droves of them come into town in the morning, laden with farm produce.

A. G.—It is estimated that there are now 200,000,000 Bibles, in different languages, in the world. This estimate is arrived at, after making due allowance for those that have been destroyed or have disappeared in some way or other.

S. M.—The art of starching linen was introduced into England by a native of Flanders in 1553.

STOTTER.—A German physician has invented a new treatment for stutterers. He says that the cause of this distressing affliction is a rush of consonant sounds to the vocal apparatus and the consequent exclusion of the vowels. He makes his patients utter words and sentences in which the long vowel sounds predominate, and after a few lessons there is a great improvement.

WHITE asks why the White House at Washington is so called.———Because it was painted white to hide the marks of the smoke and other traces of the onslaught by the British in their war with the States. It was partly destroyed on that occasion, and when it was restored, the whole was painted white. It was at first proposed to call it the "Palace," but the idea was rejected, and it was known as "Executive Mansion," until its coat of paint gained for it the present designation.

L. E.—Kissing the hand of great men was the common custom in ancient Greece. This token of homage and admiration is with us confined to the kissing of ladies' hands by gentlemen.

A. D.—The Spanish have the most polite form of address. To those whom they do not know, or with whom they are but slightly acquainted, they say not "you," but "your Grace." The butcher will ask: "Does your Grace want a leg of mutton, madam?" At the end of a letter—even a business communication — they write the initials of words that signify "who kisses your hand."

E. D.—Norway is the country you mean. In Norway the idea of equality among the different classes is very strong; the driver of a conveyance considers himself every bit as good as his fare, and many of the peasants have coats-of-arms. They are so proud that it is looked upon as derogatory to accept alms. It is therefore a lucky thing that there is but little poverty in the country.

T. A.—The man who can claim to have the most tattoo marks on his body is Professor Frank Howard, an American citizen. He is decorated with 780 designs in red, blue, and black, and the materials used in the colouring included soot, charcoal, brickdust, Indian ink and Prussian blue. It took 154 days to tattoo him all over.

W. G. asks: "Is there any plant or vegetable that will give you an electric shock?"———Yes; there is a plant called the *phytolacca electrica*, growing in hot climates, which will give you a shock that will make you sit up. Animals, birds, and insects all shun it. If a magnetic needle be placed within six yards of the plant it will be sensibly affected. It has been noticed that the energy of the plant increases during the day time.

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600	Cash Prizes of 5s. each ...	150	0	0
400	Ladies' Umbrellas, value 5s. ea.	£100	0	0
2,000	Boxes of our famous "Nubolic Soap," packed in fancy boxes containing 18 12-oz. Tablets, value 4s. box...	400	0	0
1,000	Pictures of the famous "Charge of the Light Brigade," in gilt frame, value 4s. each	200	0	0
4,582	per month	£1,749	0	0

COLLECT YOUR WRAPPERS.

CONDITIONS OF COMPETITION.

Cut off the top portion of wrapper, with the words **Watson's Matchless Cleanser** and send, postage or carriage paid, to **Joseph Watson and Sons Limited, Whitehall Soap Works, Leeds,** not later than either February 28th or March 31st. Wrappers arriving after April 1st will be valueless. Be careful to see that the full postage is paid, any parcel arriving postage or carriage not being paid, will be refused. **The Prizes** will be awarded in above order **to the senders of the highest number of wrappers.** The wrappers must be in bundles of 50, and each parcel must contain the full name and address of sender, and the number of wrappers sent must be marked on the same paper. The packages must be marked on the outside, **"Prize Competition."**

SPECIALLY NOTE. **Wrappers of unsuccessful competitors will be awarded to those sent in by them in the following month.** A list giving result of competition will be enclosed with each prize, when it is sent out. All possible speed in counting the wrappers will be made, and **Joseph Watson and Sons Limited** hope they will be able to dispatch all prizes not later than the 21st day of the month following the competition. The decision of Joseph Watson and Sons Limited to be final. Every wrapper must have first contained soap. No employee of Joseph Watson and Sons Limited will be eligible.

WATSON'S MATCHLESS CLEANSER

Has the Largest Sale of **FULL-WEIGHT 1-lb. TABLETS** in the World, and has proved itself to be one of the best Soaps ever used. Sold by all Grocers, Oilmen, and Co-operative Stores, throughout the United Kingdom.

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ASK FOR & INSIST ON HAVING
HARRIS'
DELICIOUS & ABSOLUTELY PURE
MADE ONLY BY HARRIS AND Co
GOLD MEDAL
BRYANSTON CAKE FACTORY, LONDON, W.
OF STORES & GROCERS EVERYWHERE
CAKES
APPLICATIONS FOR SOLE AGENCIES INVITED

"MATCHLESS"
"WARNING TO LADIES."
Beware of Polishes that set up injurious acids. They impregnate your cloths with verdigris and spoil your hands.
"SIMPLE TEST."
Dab a small quantity on a penny and leave it overnight. If it sets up acid the surface will become green with verdigris.
"MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH will not turn any metal green, and is therefore free from acid.
FREE FROM ACID POISON OR GRIT
LARGEST SALE IN THE WORLD
METAL POLISH.
PATON, CALVERT & Co MANUFACTURERS LIVERPOOL.

"LOUIS"
VELVETEEN

See that the name spelt L.O.U.I.S is stamped on every Yard.
TRADE MARK
ROB ASPERA JUVANT
LOUIS XI KING OF FRANCE 1461-1483.

HALL'S COCA PELLETS
TRIAL SAMPLES GRATIS.
PREVENT FATIGUE from
WALKING,
TRAVELLING
STUDY
CYCLING
SINGING
SICK NURSING
BUSINESS WORRIES
&c., &c.
CURE
SLEEPLESSNESS
BRAIN FAG
NERVOUSNESS
NEURALGIA
DESPONDENCY
EXHAUSTION
MENTAL STRAIN
&c., &c.
SEND POSTCARD FOR A FREE SAMPLE.
PRICES: 1/2, 2/11, 4/9, & 11/3 POST FREE.
SOLE MAKERS: GILBERT & HALL, CHEMISTS, BOURNEMOUTH

RED WHITE AND BLUE
SOLD EVERYWHERE
FRENCH COFFEE
DELICIOUS FOR BREAKFAST OR AFTER DINNER

ZEBRA
Grate Polish.
In Packets or as a Paste in Tins.